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JOHN OF GAUNT,

King of Castille and Leon,

and Duke of Lancaster.

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LIFE

OF

GEOFFREY CHAUCER,

THE EARLY ENGLISH POET:

INCLUDING

MEMOIRS OF HIS NEAR FRIEND AND KINSMAN,

JOHN OF GAUNT, DUKE OF LANCASTER:

WITH SKETCHES OF THE

MANNERS, OPINIONS, ARTS AND LITERATURE
OF ENGLAND

IN

THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

BY WILLIAM GODWIN.

Come like shadows; so depart!
SHAKESPEAR.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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LIFE

OF

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CHAPTER XXIV.

ROMANCE OF THE ROSE, A POEM, TRANSLATED BY CHAUCER.

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Me its of the original poem.

IT was probably during the interval of peace which followed the treaty of Bretigni, that Chaucer engaged in a literary work of the utmost importance and honour to the age and country in which he lived, the translation of the *Roman de la Rose*. We have already had occasion to mention this poem. It was the most eminent poetical composition existing in any of the modern languages of Europe, previously to the *Commedia* of Dante. The French have a just claim to priority over all the European nations, in the invention of romances of chivalry, and the production of every species of offspring of the imagination. The *Roman de la Rose*, which was written during the thirteenth century, placed their preeminence as to these early ages beyond the reach of rivalship. It may justly be regarded as the predecessor and progenitor of all that is most admirable in the effusions of modern, in contradistinction to the chivalrous, poetry.

The *Roman de la Rose* is a poem consisting of upward

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Period of Chaucer's translation.

of twenty-two thousand verses. It is of much more considerable extent than the Iliad, and above twice as long as the epic of Virgil. No period of Chaucer's life can with greater probability be fixed upon for his engaging in so gigantic and formidable a task as this translation, than that at which we are now arrived. He was in the flower of his age; and the ardent and adventurous spirit of youth was as yet unsubdued in him. He was at leisure; while the subsequent periods of his existence were occupied with public office, with foreign employments, and with calamity. He basked in the sunshine of court-favour, patronised as we have seen by the sovereign and his royal consort. His intimate and uniform patron, John of Gaunt, was lately married to a most accomplished and amiable woman, and had in right of his wife succeeded to the largest and fairest patrimony in England. Chaucer, as has already appeared, and will hereafter be more distinctly shown, was at this time a lover, a circumstance which might naturally predispose him to the translation of a work, the topics of which are the enchantments, the difficulties, and the sufferings of love. He was an unsuccessful lover; a situation which might render him less unwilling to transfuse into English the sharp and bitter reflections upon the sex occasionally interspersed in this poem.

In describing the appearance of a comely and beautiful youth in the course of the translation, Chaucer compares him to

> The lordé's sonne of Wyndésore:
>
> ver. 1250.

in the French it is simply

> *Il sembloit estre filz de roy.*
>
> ver. 1225.

Edward III. is certainly meant by the "lorde of Wyndesore." This was his distinctive appellation; he having been born at that seat, and it being the use of the times for persons, particularly those of rank, to take a surname from the place of their birth. Hence I infer that the translation was made after Chaucer had become an object of court favour, and was in the habit of beholding the sons of his master.

Petrarca's opinion of this poem.

Petrarca speaks with contempt of the *Roman de la Rose* [a]. This is as it should be. Petrarca, a true Italian, regarded with pedantic fastidiousness and loathing every thing that was ultramontane, and therefore it was natural that no literary production should excite in him greater impatience than the poem which Chaucer has translated. It does not follow that he was in any degree insincere in its condemnation. Men usually find in every book what they are strongly predisposed to find. Every work of human invention and effort has faults enough in it to satisfy the passions of the malevolent, and to justify to their own minds the scorn they express. Petrarca understood the *Roman de la Rose* no better than Voltaire understood Shakespear.

Its extensive popularity.

But, if this poem has been condemned by Petrarca, and derided by the fastidiousness of modern criticism, it was proportionately honoured in the applauses of successive ages. Petrarca, even while he condemns it, confesses that all France, with Paris at its head, was agreed in an opinion opposite to his. The last editor of this poem affirms [b] that though, previously to his impression, it had been many

[a] De Sade, Tom. III, p. 45.

[b] Roman de la Rose, 3 Tom. 12mo. Amsterdam, 1735, Preface.

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times printed, yet the number of manuscript, was much greater than that of printed, copies; a most striking illustration of the esteem and request in which it was formerly held. Clement Marot, the author whom modern France, judging by the delicacies of style only, regards as the father of its poetry, printed an edition of this work into which he introduced so many variations, as almost to amount to what the Italians call a *rifaccimento.* Ronsard, a celebrated French poet thirty years younger than Marot, is said never to have been without this poem about his person [c]. Lastly, Regnier, a satirist of the sixteenth century, who in France divides the palm of that species of composition with Boileau, has taken a part of this poem as the basis of imitation in the best and most applauded of his performances

Its authors.

The *Roman de la Rose* is the joint production of William de Lorris and John de Meun. There has been some difference of opinion, as to how much of the poem is to be ascribed to each of these writers. It has commonly been stated that the part written by William de Lorris ends at verse 4149 of the original, which, relatively to a work consisting of more than twenty-two thousand verses can scarcely be considered as any thing more than the introduction. This statement rests upon the authority of the rhyming summaries occasionally interposed throughout the work, and which are supposed to have been the production of the fifteenth century. The last editor however [d] gives it as his opinion that William de Lorris wrote 11135 verses, or about half of the poem. This

---

[c] Binet, Vie de Ronsard, apud Roman de la Rose, Preface.

[d] Note sur le vers 11135.

opinion he founds upon the authority of a passage occurring in that part of the poem; where the God of Love is introduced as prophesying that here William de Lorris shall rest from his labour, and John de Meun shall take up the pen.

Undoubtedly the authority of the body of the poem, is greater than that of the summaries which were written at a later period: but on a narrow inspection perhaps these authorities will not be found to clash. At verse 11135 the author repeats, with the variation of only one or two words, four lines which had already occurred at verse 4149, and then adds,

Cy se reposera Guillaume.

The words *Cy se reposera* may therefore perhaps as well be construed as referring to the place at which those four lines (in either construction the last written by William de Lorris) first appear, as to the place where they are a second time repeated. On this hypothesis the assertion of John de Meun at verse 11135, and the assertion of the author of the summaries in the fifteenth century, perfectly coincide.

Time when it was written.

The editor adduces, as a further argument to show that William de Lorris wrote more of the poem than has usually been ascribed to him, a passage at verse 7098, where Charles of Anjou is spoken of as the reigning king of Sicily. In this passage the defeat of Manfred is mentioned which happened in the year 1266, and the decapitation of Conradin, the lawful hereditary claimant of the crown of Sicily, which took place in 1268. From the period of these events Charles of Anjou had peaceable possession of the crown, till the era of the Sicilian vespers in 1282,

CHAP. XXIV. when he was finally expelled. This part of the poem therefore appears to have been written between the years 1268 and 1282; but it will not follow that it was written by William de Lorris.

It seems that it would be more reasonable from this internal indication of time, combined with the authorities above stated, to infer a correction of the received chronology of the poem. John de Meun informs us at verse 11164, that he entered upon the continuation of the poem more than forty years after the death of his predecessor. Taking then the mean term of the preceding dates as the epoch of John de Meun's composition, and assuming that he began his continuation in the year 1275, it will follow that William de Lorris died before 1235, instead of in 1260, the period assigned by Fauchet[e] and the subsequent writers.

It is not to be believed that a poem should have so extensively and so long engrossed the admiration of mankind, without possessing great intrinsic merit. We are not to expect however to find it a work accommodated to modern ideas, or which is not fraught with great and striking inequalities.

Its fable. The main story, which exhibits the fervour and the difficulties attendant upon the passion of love under the emblem of a rose which is to be plucked, is ill-chosen and exceedingly ridiculous. We cannot interest ourselves about a hero, of whom the plucking this rose is to be the grand achievement. After a variety of obstacles and difficulties he first succeeds so far as to kiss the rose. He is then

[e] Origine de la Langue et Poésie Françoise, chap. 125, 126.

overwhelmed with the consequences of his own temerity, appears to be further than ever from attaining the object of his pursuit, and gives himself up to despair. Jealousy builds a wall, flanked with bastions, and defended by a strong garrison, to protect the rose from further violation. The God of Love on the other hand summons his baronage, to cooperate with the attempt of the adventurous hero. After a hard campaign, and a variety of stratagems and ambushes, the rose is at length gathered; at the same moment the dawn appears, the poet awakes, and finds every thing which had happened to be a dream. All this is undoubtedly to the utmost degree frigid and puerile.

The garrison of Jealousy, as well as the army of Love, is made up of allegorical personages. We have not only Danger and Shame and Chastity and Reason, but still thinner and more impalpable personages, such as Wicked-tongue, Well-healing, False-semblant, and Kind-welcoming. What a miserable figure do such agents make in poetical narration, when compared with Venus and Mars, and Hercules and Apollo, and Hygeia and Hebe, with all their attributes and almost tangible reality, the deities of classical mythology!

The language also of the *Roman de la Rose* is in a high degree crude and unpolished. The want of a happy and delicate choice of words is by no means its greatest fault. One of the most eminent marks of distinction between a poetical and a prose language, is the concentration of the poetical manner. In prose, line after line creeps upon the reader unperceived, and provided a sentence presents to him collectively a mass of meaning, it is a point of comparative indifference whether that meaning is

Its language.

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presented in ten lines or in six. But in poetry every line has as it were a separate life, and the interposition of one feeble line is a broad and glaring deformity. The language of poetry ought to be brief and concentred; and if at certain times it indulges itself in a larger enumeration, or more voluminous flow, at least every head of the enumeration ought to be emphatical and effective. But this was a secret unknown to the versifiers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Their favourite measure, that in which the old romances are usually written, and in which the *Roman de la Rose* is composed, is nearly the measure of the poem of Hudibras: and, as this measure seems to carry with it an irresistible temptation to lead on the poet from verse to verse and from page to page, we may conceive in what manner it operated upon the unformed taste of the poetical writers of the middle ages. There are many passages in the *Roman de la Rose* extending themselves through successive pages, which are distinguished by rhyme and measure alone from the laxest and most flagging prose.

Its relative excellence.

But, if we would estimate truly any work of human intellect or genius, we must compare it, not with the more finished ideas and art which may afterward have arisen, but with the degree of merit exhibited in preceding compositions; though there are passages in the *Roman de la Rose*, which do not need to be compared with inferior works, to enable them to command our admiration. The *Roman de la Rose* was principally preceded by tales of chivalry: and, though in these there are often manifested brilliant imagination, wild and striking inventions, grand sentiments of honour, and a noble enthusiasm, yet the

main topics of which they treat are so remote from the simple and unsophisticated sentiments of the human mind, and are so distended, colossal and unnatural, as to exclude the writers who narrate them from the most genuine and unfading beauties of poetry.

Imagination and manners.

Compared then with the romances of chivalry, the Romance of the Rose offers to us the most striking improvements. It commences with a rich vein of allegory and personification; and undoubtedly nothing can be more precisely and emphatically poetical, than a well sustained personification. It has also, by means of the discourses and episodes occasionally inserted in it, a character of genuine humanness and life, and presents us with a finished picture of the manners, in many respects, of individuals in private society, as they existed in the thirteenth century.

Description of spring.

William de Lorris dreams, as Chaucer has commonly contrived to do, in the month of May, and his description of the season is exquisitely spirited and animated.

> That it was May me thoughten[e] tho,
> It is five yere or more ago;
> That it was May, thus dreméd me,
> In time of love and jolité,
> That al thing ginneth waxen gay,
> For there is nether[f] buske nor[g] hay,
> In May that it[h] n'ill shrouded bene,
> And it with newé levés[i] wrene;

[e] then. [f] bush. [g] hedge. [h] will not. [i] wrap.

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These woddés eke recoveren grene,
That drie in winter ben to sene,
And the erth wexeth proude withall
For [k] soté dewes that on it fall,
And the pover estate forgette,
In whiche that winter had it sette,
And then becom'th the grounde so proude,
That it wol have a newé shroude,
And mak'th so [l] queint his robe and fayre,
That it had hewes an hundred payre
Of grasse and flours, Inde and Pers,
And many hewés full divers;
That is the robe I mean [m] iwis,
Through whiche the ground [n] to praisen is.
The birdés that han left [o] her songe,
While thei han suffred colde ful stronge
In wethers [p] grille, and derke to sight,
Ben in May, for the sunné bright,
So glad, that they shewe in singing,
That in [o] her hert is suche liking,
That thei mote singing and ben light;
Than dothe nightingale her might
To maken noise and singen blithe;
Than is blissfull many a [q] sithe
The [r] chelaundre' and the [s] popingay;
Than youngé folke entenden aie,
For to ben gaie and amorous,
The time is than so savourous.
Harde is his herte that loveth nought
In Mey, when al this mirth is wrought.

ver. 49.

[k] sweet. [l] trim. [m] indeed. [n] worthy of great praise. [o] their.
[p] frosty. [q] time. [r] goldfinch. [s] parrot.

The translation of this passage, as well as of almost every other part of the poem, is no less singularly close and faithful to the original, than it is spirited, rich and flowing. CHAP. XXIV.

The author dreams that it is already morning, and that, animated by the beauty of the season, he rises from his bed, and sets out on a walk to enjoy the freshness of the odours. His path conducts him along the banks of a river, which is admirably described, and at length brings him to the wall of a spacious garden.

Garden of Mirth: its walls.

This garden proves to be the Garden of Mirth; and the author by a most ingenious fiction, in representing the walls, as

> Portrayred without, and well entayled
> With many full riche portreitures,
>
> ver. 140.

has described the figures on the outside, as being of those passions and abstract qualities which are most opposite to Mirth; thus giving to this part of his composition, when compared with that in which he delineates the persons frequenting the garden, all the advantages of the most perfect contrast. The figures he describes are ten, *viz.* Hate, Felony, Villainy, Covetousness, Avarice (these two are distinguished by making the former represent eagerness of accumulation, and the latter the extremest reluctance to expend), Envy, Sorrow, Old Age, Hypocrisy and Poverty: and it is not easy to conceive any thing more animated or more consummately picturesque than most of these descriptions. As the progress of the poetical art in these early times must be exceedingly interesting to every reader

CHAP. XXIV.

of this work, and as the state of poetry under William de Lorris, one hundred years before Chaucer, is in some sense an object of more curious observation than even the poetry of Chaucer, there will be found in an Appendix to this volume the delineation at large of the personage of Old Age[t].

Its inhabitants.

From the inner side of the inclosure proceeds the sound of the "jargoning" of a thousand birds, and excites in the poet an eager desire to enter the garden. He finds the walls however impossible to be scaled, and therefore resolves to follow their circumference, till at length he comes to a wicket, which is characteristically opened to him by the portress, Idleness. He hastens to the presence of Mirth (in French *Deduit*), whom he finds engaged in an entertainment of singing and dancing. The persons of the dancers are then copiously described: Mirth with his partner Gladness; Love accompanied by Beauty; and next after her severally the ladies Riches, Bounty, Affability, Courtesy and Idleness, with their partners, whose figures are partly described, but to whom the poet has not given names. It is not without meaning that Riches is represented as immediately attendant upon (or usher to) Beauty.

Fountain of Love.

The dance ended, the poet resolves to visit every part of the garden, and to observe its beauties at leisure. In this ramble he is followed every where, unperceived, by the God of Love, attended by his armour-bearer. After a variety of other beauties which present themselves, he arrives at a well, called the Fountain of Love, at the bottom of

---

[t] Appendix, No. I

which, beneath the clear and translucent water, are two crystals,

That, whan the sunné clere in sight
Cast in that welle his bemés bright,
And that the hete descended is,
Than tak'th the cristall stone iwis
Againe the sunne an hundred hewés,
Blewe, yelow, red, that fresh and new is;
Yet hath the mervailous cristall
Suche strength, that the place over all,
Both foule, and tre, and levés grene,
And all the * yerde in it is sene:
. . . .
For ever in whiche halfe ye be,
Ye may wel halfe the gardine se,
And if ye turne, ye may right wele
Sene the reménaunt every dele;
For there is none so litel thing
So hid ne closen with shitting,
That it n'is sene, as though it were
Ypainted in the cristall there.

ver. 1573.

The peculiar property of this fountain is, that whoever looks into it, will infallibly see something represented in the crystal, which will fix his affections, and plant in him the passion of love. This, we are told, is the very fountain into which Narcissus looked, when he became enamoured of his own image.

* garden.

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The rose.

The object which, among a thousand presented by this mirror, attracts the poet's attention, is a rose-bush, covered with roses, some full-blown, and some which as yet are only buds. He cannot resist the impulse to approach the object the image of which has impressed him with so strong a sensation. As he draws nearer the savour of the roses seems to embalm the air, and thrills through his nerves. Above the rest a half-blown bud fixes his partiality, and he would fain pluck it, but fears to offend the proprietor and lord of the garden.

Commencement of the passion.

The God of Love espies his opportunity, and seizes his weapons. In the hands of his armour-bearer are two bows and ten arrows, the properties and effects of each of which are described; the one tending to generate a good and wholsome affection, and the other shame, villainous measures and despair. Love employs against the poet his better and more friendly weapons. He shoots at him, from behind a fig-tree, five arrows in quick succession, of which the poet draws out the shaft with the feather, but the barb in each instance remains in his heart. This done, Love suddenly leaps upon his victim, and calls upon him to surrender. The poet makes no resistance; and, to secure his conquest, the God fastens his padlock upon the lover's heart. The passion of the narrator for the idol of his choice is now complete, and there is nothing upon which his whole soul is more earnestly bent, than to gather the rose toward which his preference is determined.

Commandments of Love.

The God having thus secured his vassal, endeavours to inspire him with courage and good heart, and exhorts him cheerfully to perform the commandments which Love is accustomed to give to his votaries. The lover earnestly

intreats to be made acquainted with these commandments: and here commences a discourse upon the art of love, occupying the space of eight hundred lines. In this part of his poem William de Lorris has taken advantage in several places, of his acquaintance with the works of Ovid; yet there is in it much of what is truly original and his own: and there is no portion of the *Roman de la Rose* more qualified to excite and to gratify the reader's curiosity. To every one who is inquisitive respecting the manners of distant ages, or has a desire to perfect his knowledge of the nature of man, this passage must prove a valuable relic, and a most acceptable entertainment. The writers of these early ages had dealt so long in unnatural manners, forced heroism, and incredible achievements, that it must afford an enviable relief to a mind of taste, to meet with a passage so natural, so genuine and so human. In the adventures of Arthur and Charlemagne, of the Red-Cross-Knights and the Soldans, we scarcely recognise the features of our common species. They are like the strange, uncouth and unwieldy figures, which we see dressed up for a masquing or a coronation. With William de Lorris in the present instance we at once descend to the level scene of private life, and the parlours and domestic sentiments of our ancestors. The versifiers indeed who wrote before the Romance of the Rose, had their comic and satirical tales; but these, as well as the tales of high and heroic achievement, were strained beyond the true bias. They are exhibitions, intended to produce strong and unusual sensations, and do not present us with our fellow-man, undressed and unconscious of a spectator. In the counsels of prudence or of conduct which are here delivered to us,

Romance writers.

Fableours.

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the most secret sentiments of the human mind are unfolded, and the minute impulses which often escape the observation of the man upon whom they act. The true lover of man feels an exquisite and incalculable delight, when he is enabled to perceive in how many respects the men of five centuries ago identify themselves with him and his contemporaries. This makes the difference between Livy and Froissart, the difference between the history on the one hand of the harsh, the haughty, the factious, the public-minded and stoical republic of Rome, and on the other of the good old people of England, the peasant in the midst of his family, the hospitable, well-humoured and open-hearted country-gentleman, and the baron, surrounded by his vassals,

Historians.

> Whom they did ever honour as their guide,
> Lov'd as their father, as their master follow'd,
> As their great patron thought on in their prayers[v]:

The manners of England under the Plantagenets were in many respects extremely unlike our own, the relative situations of man and man, of the higher classes and the lower, are usually said to have been totally different; yet it is only man with a little variety of garb, and exhibiting in the main the same passions and humours, human frailty and human kindness. When the men of former times are shown as William de Lorris brings them to our view, the sacred awe with which we contemplate the airy shadows of the departed perishes from our bosoms, and they become to us our brother-men, living, moving and real. It is thus

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[v] Lear, Act. I, Scene i.

that, in reading passages of great animation and fire in the best authors, we seem to hold direct communion with the author himself, and can scarcely be persuaded that the heart which dictated such passages has ceased to beat, and the eye which sparkled with such sentiments has ceased to glisten.—The discourse of the God of Love to his vassal is in many respects so curious and important, that it has been thought proper to insert it in the Appendix to this volume [w].

William de Lorris.

On the whole, it may safely be affirmed that the first 2950 verses of William de Lorris may challenge a comparison with most of the happiest effusions of the genius of poetry: they exhibit an admirable variety of talent; and it will be found difficult to pronounce from the perusal, whether the author excels most in the richness of his descriptive powers, in the spirit and force of his allegorical paintings, or in the acuteness and exactness of his observations upon life and manners.

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[w] Appendix, No. II.

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ROMANCE OF THE ROSE CONTINUED.—SATIRE UPON THE MENDICANTS.

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John de Meun.

THE part of the *Roman de la Rose* which was written by John de Meun is much more miscellaneous, and has infinitely less of the poetical spirit, than the part written by his predecessor. It is however by no means destitute of merit. The author has admitted into it an unbounded variety of matter, and made it the vehicle of all his satire, of all his observation upon life and manners, and perhaps of all his learning. Many classical stories are interspersed; and several of them, as the editor of 1735 has justly remarked, "are introduced in so unconnected and extraordinary a manner, that any other place in the poem would have suited them as well, as that in which they are inserted[a]."

False-semblant: satire upon the mendicant friars.

One of the individuals in the army of the God of Love is False-semblant, the offspring of Guile, begotten upon Hypocrisy. From the introduction of this personage John de Meun takes occasion in more than a thousand verses to pour out his spleen against the mendicant friars. False-semblant is made to give an account of himself to his commander, and in this account the poet has interwoven his

[a] Preface: Economie et Ordre de ce Roman.

satire upon religious imposture. He digresses into the history of William de St. Amour a distinguished polemical champion, and of all the principal controversies occasioned by the institution and proceedings of the mendicant orders. As this history strongly tends to illustrate the manners and sentiments of these early ages, and is connected with certain transactions in which Chaucer was afterward engaged, a few pages of this work cannot be more profitably spent than in illustrating it.

Revival of learning in the twelfth century.

"The revival of learning" is a phrase which for a considerable time past has been almost exclusively appropriated to the period of the taking of Constantinople, and the age of Leo X. It has already appeared that the same phrase might without any striking impropriety be applied to the twelfth century. It was then that the night which threatened to bury all Europe in barbarism began to be dissipated; it was then that certain literary adventurers imported from the Saracens science, the investigation of nature, and the Aristotelian philosophy; it was then that romance was invented, and poetry seemed to be new created; and it was this period which was illustrated by the labours of Abelard, William of Malmesbury, Peter of Blois, John of Salisbury and Joseph of Exeter; as well as of Turpin, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Benoit and Wace.

Its effects upon the church establishments.

This revival of learning however seemed at first to bear no favourable aspect upon the cause of religion, at least of the species of religion at that time established in Europe. During the period so justly distinguished by the appellation of the dark ages, the usurpation of the Roman pontiffs, and the dissoluteness of the clergy, particularly of the monks, had been without limits and without shame.

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While ignorance universally prevailed, the most imperious insolence was regarded with terror and veneration, and the most transparent veil of hypocrisy and affectation was sufficient to deceive the superstitious multitude. But, when the light of the twelfth century, however to us it may appear but a glimmering of intellect, broke in upon the church, it produced an effect similar to that of a brilliant lamp suddenly introduced into an assembly of persons the most disorderly and licentious, who had thought to practise their orgies with impunity under the friendly cover of the night. If the usurpations and the vices of the church had proceeded with any degree of moderation, habit would have reconciled her members and subjects to the deformity; but the trial had been made in too deep a spirit of security, and the enchantment broke. There was considerable reason to expect that a violent disgrace and overthrow of the church would follow in no long time.

Rise of the mendicant orders.

In this crisis a remedy presented itself, exactly adapted to the nature of the evil, and the character of the times. Serious and conscientious men had reflected with anguish and despondency upon the dissolution of manners, and the progress of a scoffing spirit of irreligion. Multitudes were anxious for the revival of a practical sense of religious impressions, to raise again the drooping spirit of the church, and to recal Europe at large to the obedience of her spiritual father. As to the usurpations of the sovereign pontiff, that was a question to be settled by mutual accommodation, and a crafty and temporising conduct, between the spiritual and the temporal powers. But the open immorality of the clergy, and the profligacy of the monks, required a more decisive interposition. This interposition was

found in the institution and patronage of the mendicant orders.

The two most celebrated of these orders were the Dominican and Franciscan, and they owed their origin respectively to persons of seemingly very opposite characters. St. Dominic was a priest of a most lofty and despotic temper, inspired with capacious views of policy and dominion, and impatient of an opposer. He it was who led the sacred armies of the church in their pious crusade for the extermination of the Albigenses, and who invented that celebrated and tremendous machine which contributed so much to the maintenance of the Holy Catholic religion for successive centuries, the tribunal of the Inquisition [b]. St. Francis on the contrary appears to have been a melancholy and ingenuous madman. In his youth, we are told, he led the most debauched and disorderly life. Being seized with a fit of sickness, the consequence of his excesses, he became deeply impressed with a sense of remorse, abjured the commerce of the world, and restrained himself to so gloomy a solitude, and so severe a regimen of life, as macerated his flesh, and rendered his countenance shrivelled and ghastly. To subdue the ascendancy of the flesh, he rolled himself naked in drifts of snow [c]; and to terminate the hostilities of the enemies of the church, he made a voluntary expedition to Jerusalem, to convert the Saracenic soldan who presided there [d]. These two men conceived about the same time, and

St. Dominic.

St. Francis of Assisi.

[b] Mosheim, Historia Ecclesiastica, Cent. XIII, Pars II, cap. ii, §. 24.

[c] Bonaventura, apud Bayle, Dictionnaire Historique, art. S. François.

[d] Moreri, Dict. Hist.

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probably without either deriving the idea from the other, the project of instituting a society of persons, who should engage in the vows of celibacy and humility, and devote their lives to the offices of piety and benevolence.

Vows of the friars.

Voluntary poverty was one of the fundamental laws of the monastic orders; but, though according to the rules of these orders no individual could call the smallest trifle his own, the society at large might have property, and under cover of this indulgence they became, as the monastic discipline relaxed, wealthy, magnificent and luxurious. The institutors of the mendicant orders provided against this corruption, by refusing to their followers the possession of property, either private or public. They were accordingly wanderers on the face of the earth; without income, without money and without habitation; indefatigable in the duties of preaching, and in all pious and benevolent offices; travelling from city to city, and from kingdom to kingdom; subsisting upon the alms of the charitable, and refusing even of these more than was necessary for the most scanty subsistence. It is incredible how popular and venerable these fraternities, so strongly contrasted with the indifference of the secular clergy and the disorders committed by the monks, in a short time became. Their original sovereign, and the founder of the tribunal of the Inquisition, was pope Innocent III, the pontiff who exacted as a penance from John king of England the resignation of his crown to the legate of the holy see.

Their literary eminence.

The mendicant orders, with a foresight which may well impress us with astonishment, and which showed a deep observation of the character of the age, added the cul-

tivation of science, and the subtlest refinements of intellectual disquisition, to their exalted pretensions to an uncommon portion of piety and virtue. Thus they addressed all the prejudices and prepossessions then afloat in the Christian world at once. The subtlest intellects and the greatest wits of the twelfth and the earlier part of the thirteenth centuries were almost universally of the mendicant orders; Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, Johannes Duns Scotus, William Occam and Roger Bacon. Considering then the variety of recommendations they had to boast, we can scarcely be surprised to find them in a manner all-powerful in the Christian church, and engrossing to themselves the entire authority of the Roman pontiff.

Opposed by the heads of the universities.

The earliest opposers of the mendicant orders were the dignitaries in the several Western universities. We have already had occasion to observe how greatly they had risen on the disrepute of the monastic orders, and what formidable rivals they found in the Franciscan and Dominican societies[e]. The university of Paris took the lead among these establishments for the purposes of general education, and by natural consequence put itself foremost in the controversy with the mendicants. William de St. Amour, above mentioned, was the most considerable and most distinguished of her champions.

Evangelium Æternum.

The mendicants on the other hand were not slow to encounter, with all the weapons of argument and invective, the assailants who were drawn up against them. But

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e Chap. X.

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defence is a delicate and a dangerous cause; and it not seldom happens that a proceeding or a dogma is more discredited by an unskilful vindication, than by all which its adversaries can allege against it. One of the most extraordinary literary productions which appeared on the side of the friars, and which has particularly attracted the attention of John de Meun, is styled *Evangelium Æternum*, and was commented on and illustrated in a second work, entitled *Introductio ad Evangelium Æternum*. The history of these books is as follows.

Abbot Joachim.

There lived in the eleventh century an enthusiast of the name of Joachim, abbot of Flora in the province of Calabria, whom his contemporaries revered as divinely inspired, and whose prophecies they equalled with the most celebrated of ancient times. Like other prophets, a favourite subject of his effusions was the melioration of mankind, the introduction of a purer religion, and a happier and more disinterested state of society. Joachim may be considered as being with regard to Italy, what Merlin was in our own island, and Nostradamus in France. His prophecies were collected after his death, and published with the title of the Everlasting Gospel; a title borrowed from a text in the book of Revelations[f], where the evangelist is represented as "seeing an angel flying in the midst of heaven, having *the everlasting gospel*[g]."

Mitigation of the rule of the mendicant orders.

This book of the abbot Joachim having fallen into the hands of some of the more zealous Franciscans, was re-

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[f] Chap. XIV, ver. 6.

[g] Cave, Hist. Lit. art. Joachimus. Mosheim, ubi supra, §. 33.

garded by their ardent and exalted spirits as prophetic of the founder and proceedings of their order. A controversy had arisen in the bosom of the mendicant societies respecting the due interpretation of the rules of their discipline, and one of the popes, having coincided with the sentiments of the less strict among them, published a bull, by which it was allowed to the mendicants to possess and to use certain places, habitations, chattels and books, on condition that the property of all these things remained in the Roman pontiff, to be disposed of by him at all times as he should think fitting[g]. This mitigation was considered by the severer party as a flagrant evasion of the spirit of their institution, and was justly represented as affording an opening to all the abuses so grievously complained of in the monastic orders.

Tenets of the spiritual party.

The severer, or as they styled themselves, the spiritual party, inflamed by this opposition, had their minds continually turned upon the sanctity of their founder, and the merit of their proceedings. Consulting the abbot Joachim, they found in the "angel flying in the midst of heaven," their patron, St. Francis; and accordingly they divided the religious history of the world into three epochs; the era of the Old Testament, which they termed the reign of God the Father; the era of the New Testament, which was the reign of God the Son: These they styled the imperfect ages, and maintained that Christianity, as well as Judaism, was now to be abolished, to make room for the era of the Everlasting Gospel, which was the reign of the

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[g] Mosheim, §. 31.

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Holy Ghost. The commencement of this era they predicted for the year 1260. The ministers of this great revolution were to be the mendicant friars, bare-footed and humble men, destitute of all sublunary emoluments, who were to reform the world, and effect the salvation of the human race. Filled with these notions, and regarding the abbot Joachim as the prophet of their order, they represented the books of the Old and New Testament as mere dross and carnal accommodation, compared with the purer and more perfect principles developed in the Everlasting Gospel[h]. These opinions were arranged into a system, and published under the title of an Introduction to the Everlasting Gospel, by John of Parma, who was for a short time general of the Franciscan order, and had been expelled from that situation by the machinations of the party of the anti-spiritualists[i]. It seems even to be insinuated by the adversaries of the mendicants, and by William de St. Amour with the rest, that John of Parma, the commentator upon the Everlasting Gospel, had himself forged the book he undertook to explain.

John of Parma.

Claim of the Dominicans to certain professorships in the university of Paris.

William de St. Amour, doctor of the Sorbonne, a celebrated establishment in France which originated about this time, was the most eminent of the adversaries of the mendicant party. We have already seen how formidable the mendicants had rendered themselves to the university of Oxford, by seducing the scholars who came thither for education, to desert the bosom of their *alma mater*, and take

h Cave, Historia Literaria, Conspectus Seculi XIII.

i Cave, ubi supra. Mosheim, §. 32.

upon them the vows of perpetual celibacy and poverty[k]. They were not less formidable rivals to the most eminent Christian academy of those times, the university of Paris. The Dominicans claimed to exercise certain professorships in that university, and it will easily be conceived how great advantages such a situation afforded them, for the propagation of their principles, and the seduction of youth. This claim of the Dominicans was warmly contested for more than twenty years[l]; and the champions of the university felt themselves impelled to investigate at large the principles and practices of the mendicant orders.

St. Amour *De Periculis Novissimorum Temporum*.

The principal work of William de St. Amour against the mendicant friars is entitled *De Periculis Novissimorum Temporum*; and John de Meun has contrived to interweave a sort of abstract of this work into the poem here under consideration. St. Amour resolved to encounter the friars with their own weapons. Finding that they drew a sanction to their establishment from the book of Revelations, he had recourse to the writings of St. Paul, and found a prophecy of the usurpation and ambition of the mendicants, in the predictions of that apostle respecting "the perils of the latter times, when the man of sin shall be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth, and exalteth himself above, all that is called God[m]."

Accusations against the mendicants.

Two points are urged with great spirit and emphasis against the mendicant orders by William de St. Amour, and after him by John de Meun. First, the conduct of

[k] Chap. X. [l] Mosheim, §. 27.

[m] I Tim. Ch. iv. ver. 1. II Thess. Chap. ii. ver. 3, 4.

these friars in insinuating themselves into the houses of individuals, hearing their confessions, giving them absolution, and seducing them from those spiritual pastors and bishops under whose care and superintendence the established order of the Christian hierarchy had placed them. John de Meun alleges in a satirical manner that the friars are very little disposed to exercise their powers of edification upon the poor, but that they confine themselves to the eminent, the powerful, and the wealthy. They urge, he says, in vindication of this conduct, that rich men are more exposed to the temptations of the world, have more sins to answer for, and therefore stand in more urgent need of spiritual assistance.

The other point very elaborately treated against the mendicants is, their idleness, and their mode of subsisting upon the earnings of men more industrious than themselves. The friars alleged that Christ and his apostles lived in the same manner, wanderers on the face of the earth, and without visible means of subsistence. But against this their opponents urged certain texts of St. Paul, in which he recommends to his followers to "work with their own hands[n]," and appeals to those he taught, whether he at any time accepted "any man's silver or gold[o]." St. Augustine is also quoted to prove, that devotion has by no means so exclusive a claim upon us as to supersede the exercise of secular industry.

> For he that wol gone idelly,
> And useth it aie besily

[n] I Thess. Chap. iv, ver. 11.

[o] Acts, Chap. xx, ver. 33.

To haunten other menné's table,
He is a [p] trechour ful of fable;
Ne he ne maie by gode reson
Excuse him by his orison,
For men behoveth in some gise
Ben somtime out of God's servise,
To gon and purchasen [q] her nede.

ver. 6599.

John de Meun concludes his philippic against the mendicants by affirming that the friars are Antichrist, and rhetorically contrasting St. John (John of Parma) with St. Peter. He accuses the mendicant party,

And [r] than commaunden thei to [s] sleen
All [t] tho that with Peter yben.
But thei shall never have that might,
And, God [u] to forne for [w] strief to fight,
That thei ne shall ynough yfinde
That Peter's lawe shall have in minde,
And ever holde, and so maintene;
That at the last it shall be sene,
That thei shall all comen thereto,
For aught that thei can speke or do.
And thilké lawe ne shall not stonde,
That thei by John have understonde,
But, maugre [x] hem, it shall adoun,
And ben brought to confusioun.

ver. 7291.

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[p] impostor. [q] their. [r] then. [s] slay, destroy. [t] those.
[u] going before, favouring. [w] *fortè*, strength. [x] them.

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The Everlasting Gospel condemned.

It is obvious that the mendicants by the publication of this book of the Everlasting Gospel, with the comments of John of Parma, afforded their adversaries a great advantage against them. The doctors of the university of Paris immediately began the cry of heresy and blasphemy; and so importunate were they in their representations to the holy father, that pope Alexander IV. was compelled, much against his will, in 1255, the year after the publication of John of Parma, to order the book to be suppressed[y]. He however took care that the mandate should be executed with all possible mildness, lest such a measure might in any way contribute to tarnish the reputation of the mendicants. Whatever might be the sentiments respecting the new orders, of the doctors of the university of Paris, who were principally interested for the cause of general learning and the good government of the church, the Roman pontiffs well knew that the friars were to be ranked among their steadiest troops, and would prove the most strenuous abettors of the declining authority of the visible head of the church.

St. Amour condemned.

The friars were sensible of the advantage they possessed in so powerful a patronage; and the Everlasting Gospel having been condemned in 1255, a memorable embassy appeared before the pope in the following year, to complain of William de St. Amour's treatise *De Periculis Temporum.* Albertus Magnus was at the head of this embassy, and Thomas Aquinas the reporter of the cause[z]. The representations of these illustrious pleaders were attended with

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[y] Mosheim, §. 34.   [z] Casimirus Oudinus, apud Cave, art. Aquinas, nota a.

Victory of the mendicants.

perfect success: St. Amour's book was pronounced libellous and heretical; it was ordered to be burned by the common hangman; and sentence of banishment from France was issued against its author[a]. Humbled by this proceeding, and deprived of their leader, the doctors of the university in 1259 gave up their cause in despair, and not only admitted the Dominicans to the professorships in question, but at the same time conceded equal privileges to the order of the Franciscans[b]. In the following year, which had been specified in the predictions of the Everlasting Gospel, the spiritual party among the Franciscans gained a victory over their opponents, and the decree of Innocent IV. mitigating the severity of the rule of St. Francis was solemnly annulled[c].

St. Amour reinstated.

No sooner however had pope Alexander IV, the great adversary of William de St. Amour, expired, than the latter returned to Paris, and was reinstated in his former dignities. The university was now less strenuous and peremptory in her opposition to the mendicant orders, but she received St. Amour with open arms, as the most generous of her champions, and the martyr of her cause. On his part, he showed himself by no means subdued by the adversity he had sustained, and persisted as long as he lived in the most galling and unintermitted attacks upon the mendicants, the authors of his disgrace[d].

Gerson's censure of the *Roman de la Rose*.

Gerson, the most active and eloquent leader in the council of Constance in 1414, has expressed himself with the greatest abhorrence against John de Meun for his share in

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[a] Mosheim, §. 28. [b] ditto, §. 27. [c] ditto, §. 32. [d] ditto, §. 28.

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the composition of the *Roman de la Rose*, alleging that, "if he thought the author did not repent himself of that book before he died, he would no more vouchsafe to pray for his soul, than he would for that of Judas who betrayed Christ [e]." This antipathy of the orthodox divine has sometimes been ascribed to the licentious sentiments occasionally interspersed in the work. But it is probable that it rather arose from the free insinuations of the poet respecting religious hypocrisy, and his attacks upon those orders of men, which Gerson well knew had essentially contributed to the prosperity of the Catholic Church.

These particulars relative to the history of the mendicant friars, obscure and personal as on a superficia lview they may appear, tend eminently to illustrate the state of the church, and the temper and feelings which at this time prevailed respecting the practices of the Roman Catholic religion; and will probably be found, not only to furnish the best commentary upon one of Chaucer's most voluminous productions, but also the fittest introduction to the history of those measures of ecclesiastical polity, in which Chaucer himself was afterward concerned.

[e] Rubric of Chaucer's Romaunt of the Rose.

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ROMANCE OF THE ROSE CONCLUDED.—SATIRE UPON WOMEN.—FRENCH POETRY OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

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Satire upon women introduced into this poem.

THE discourse, which, as has already been mentioned, was imitated by Regnier, the satirist of the reign of Henry IV. of France, is considerably longer than that of False-semblant upon religious imposture. It is supposed to be addressed, by an old woman whom Jealousy had appointed porter to one of the gates of her fortification, to *Bel-accueil*, or Kind-Welcoming, a personage whom, as being one of the abettors of the lover in his adventure, Jealousy had seized and shut up in a strong tower. The Old-Woman is prevailed upon by a detachment of the baronage of Love, consisting of Largesse and Courtesy, to release the prisoner; and previously to her dismissing him from durance, she addresses to him the discourse in question. It is sufficiently remarkable that, though the instructions of the Old-Woman are addressed to a stripling, they are so constructed as to have relation almost exclusively to the use of her own sex: a sufficient proof either that this discourse is a translation only of some satire which was already in the possession of popular favour, or that the poet had written it for a different occasion, and found it convenient to insert it in the present work.

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The discourse of the Old-Woman may be considered as almost a complete code of female libertinism: and it is not a little extraordinary, that the very age in which the system of modern gallantry was perfected, and in which men learned to regard the gentler sex with a distance and awe, that borrowed its language from the phrases of divine worship, should be distinguished for depravity and licentiousness of manners. The tales which Boccaccio, La Fontaine, Voltaire, and others, have consecrated and immortalised with all the graces of humour and style, were the offspring of this period; and these tales are known not to be characterised by any feature more than by the salaciousness of their descriptions and the relaxation of their morals.

Plan of the satire.

The discourse of the Old-Woman in the Romance of the Rose is precisely in the same taste, and stained with the same errors, as the tales of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The idea upon which it is constructed is sufficiently ingenious. The Old-Woman had been in her time the very model of libertinism: but she is now infirm, and ugly, and poor, and discontented; and is desirous of instilling principles into her juniors, which may cause them to take such revenge upon the male sex for her misfortunes, as she is past the opportunity of taking for herself. She had received in her youth an infinity of presents from men who loved her; but instead of converting them into a fund to cheer her amidst the sufferings of old age, as she says she ought to have done, she had bestowed them as freely as she had received them, upon a man who did not love her, but of whom she was infatuated. This favourite, it seems, had every vice that is incident to a profligate youth; ingratitude, and lechery, and gluttony, and gaming. He

therefore dissipated the treasures of his mistress as fast as she supplied them.

Stung with the recollection of her misconduct in this respect, the principal lesson of her discourse, which she dwells upon with the greatest earnestness, and to which she returns at every interval, is rapaciousness. She advises her pupils to give no entertainment to the sentiment of love; but, guarding their hearts at every avenue, to be boundless and incessant in their extortions. For this purpose she recommends that a woman should encourage many lovers at once, and lay her snares for all; just as a wolf who breaks into a sheep-fold, and is eager to devour one sheep, flies at a thousand, and does not determine, till he has actually slaughtered his prey, which of the flock is destined to gorge the keenness of his appetite. The Old-Woman further proceeds to give rules for the manufacture of artificial beauty, and for assuming a specious and delusive amiableness of manners. She inveighs with great animation against chastity, which she treats as the bitterest species of slavery, and altogether contrary to the law of our nature. In this part of the poem the author has introduced a simile of a bird in a cage, which he expands with great vigour and felicity of imagination. "The bird," says he, "taken from the bright-green wood in which he was bred, and shut up in a cage, is perhaps fed with the utmost care, and provided with the most delicious morsels; he sings with every symptom of cheerfulness of heart, and his carols, which begin with the morning, terminate only with the darkness of the night: yet he desires the broad-branching woods, which nature had instructed him to love, and among which he so easily

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found nourishment and pastime; thither his thought is for ever turned, and all his study is how he may regain his unshackled condition; the food provided for him, urged by the passion which burns in his heart, he tramples under foot, and traverses his cage with hasty and impatient step, searching where he may find a hole or a chink, which might serve as a passage to his beloved liberty."

L'oysel du jolys vert boscage,
Quant il est pris & mis en cage,
Et nourry ententivement
Leans délicieusement,
Et chante tant que sera vifz,
De cueur gay, ce vous est advis:
Si desire il les boys ramez,
Qu'il a naturelment amez,
Et vouldroit sur les arbres estre,
Jà si bien ne le sçait-on paistre;
Tousjours y pense, & s'estudie
A recouvrer sa franche vie;
Sa viande à ses piedz demarche;
Pour l'ardeur que son cueur luy fache,
Et va par sa cage trassant
A grant angoisse pourchassant,
Comment fenestre ou partuys truisse
Par où voler au boys s'en puisse *.

ver. 14717.

The lessons of John de Meun's Old-Woman, how to receive two lovers at once, without awakening suspicion

* We do not possess Chaucer's translation of this passage.

in either, and how to elude the vigilance of a jealous husband, are adroit and ingenious: but they have been so often repeated, either from him or from the older writers from whom he drew them, that they would no longer exercise the power of novelty over any modern reader.

Imitated by Regnier.

The discourse of John de Meun's Old-Woman has been imitated from the *Roman de la Rose* by Regnier, a poet of the reign of Henry IV. first monarch of the house of Bourbon, in his Thirteenth Satire, entitled *Macette, ou l'Hypocrisie Déconcertée.*

French poetry of the sixteenth century.

French poetry may be said to have experienced an entire cycle of revolutions in the sixteenth century; but it never reached, in that or any subsequent period, the pregnancy of fancy and brilliancy of colouring which we recognise in William de Lorris. The beginning of the sixteenth century was the age of Marot, who is vulgarly considered as the father of French poetry, and who first gave to his native tongue that beauty of style, that winning simplicity and native eloquence, which must always afford gratification to the reader of taste. It was the same charm which Amyot, and, with somewhat less severity of system, Montaigne, soon after gave to the French prose. The middle of the sixteenth century was a period of corruption and false taste, such as at some time or other seems to visit the literature of every country. Ronsard, and his imitators, filled their writings with pedantic allusions, with phrases borrowed from the learned languages, and with strained and unnatural ornaments, by means of which their productions are rendered in a high degree harsh and obscure. It is perhaps characteristic of works written in an ill taste, and at the same time stamped with the marks

Marot.

Ronsard, Du Bellay and Du Bartas.

CHAP. XXVI. of energy and individuality of thinking, that their first success is occasionally more brilliant and astonishing than that of works, of which the excellence is sterling, and calculated to secure their reception to the latest posterity. Such is the case with Ronsard, Du Bellay and Du Bartas; of the last of whom upward of thirty editions are said to have been printed within the space of five or six years[b].

The reign of Henry IV. of France was the period in which this false taste was exploded. The two great ornaments of this period are Regnier and Malherbe.

Malherbe.

Malherbe is universally treated by the French critics as the creator of their genuine classical poetry. He gave the law which has ever since been maintained; and no French writer of verses has wandered out of the course marked for him by Malherbe, with impunity. He taught to compress a sentiment or a saying within the limits of a couplet, and by that means to take from it feebleness and prolixity, and give it zest and an aptness to be remembered. He gave to the versification of his country that degree of harmony and rythm of which it is entitled to boast; and he expressed his meaning with clearness, and what the French call elevation, that is, an exemption from phrases low, colloquial and trite. His words fall into their just and natural places, and his language is elegant and unforced.

But, if French poetry is indebted to Malherbe for its greatest excellences, it may perhaps be said to have had entailed upon it by him all its defects. Malherbe was a slow

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[b] Moreri, Dictionnaire, art. Du Bartas. His words are, *On n'a pas laissé d'en faire en moins de cinq ou six ans plus de vingt ou trente éditions.*

and elaborate writer. His manner is finished with the nicest care; but his matter scarcely shows itself worthy of the cost of its attire. He has no copiousness of imagination, or boldness of thought. The character which Regnier gives of him in one of his satires, was the fruit of provocation[c], and is of course exaggerated; but it is happily conceived, and in all that is fundamental is sufficiently borne out by the productions of him who is the subject of it. Regnier has thought proper to make a class of the person he censures, and to express his invective in the plural number.

> Cependant, leur sçavoir ne s'estend seulement
> Qu'à regratter un mot douteux au jugement,
> Prendre garde qu'un *qui* ne heurte une diphtongue;
> Espier si des vers la rime est breve ou longue;
> Ou bien si la voyelle à l'autre s'unissant,
> Ne rend point à l'oreille un vers trop languissant;

[c] The provocation was this. Desportes, the uncle of Regnier and one of the most respectable poets of his day, gave a dinner to a literary party, at which both Regnier and Malherbe were present. When they entered, the soup was already served. The venerable old man rose from table to do honour to his guest; and, having mentioned a Version of the Psalms which he had just published, added that he would go and fetch a copy, which he would request Malherbe to do him the favour to accept. Malherbe, the most caustic and cynical of men, begged that he would not give himself that trouble, observed that he had seen the book, and sarcastically remarked that the old gentleman's soup would give him more satisfaction than his Psalms. The good humour of the party was immediately overclouded; and Regnier, stung with the affront offered to his honourable kinsman, poured out his feelings in one of his satires, in which, in a generous and dignified manner, he expatiates upon the talents of his contemporary poets, in opposition to Malherbe, whom he represents as denying the smallest merit to any of them.

Racan, apud Oeuvres de Regnier, Edit. 1780.

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Et laissent sur le verd le noble de l'ouvrage.
Nul esguillon divin n'esleve leur courage;
Ils rampent bassement, foibles d'inventions,
Et n'osent, peu hardis, tenter les fictions,
Froids à l'imaginer: car s'ils font quelque chose,
C'est proser de la rime, & rimer de la prose,
Que l'art lime, & relime, & polit de façon
Qu'elle rend à l'oreille un agréable son;
Et voyant qu'un beau feu leur cervelle n'embrase,
Ils attisent leurs mots, enjolivent leur phrase,
Affectent leurs discours tout si relevé d'art,
Et peignent leurs deffaux de couleur & de fard.

Satyre IX.

Inferior thoughts alone their powers engage;
To clear of doubtful words the elaborate page,
To choose their tinkling rhymes with nicest care,
Nor rugged sounds, nor gaping vowels spare,
Terms stain'd by vulgar use to banish thence,
Nor let one homely line affright the sense.
Such is their praise: unconscious of the fire,
That bids the rapt enthusiast aspire,
Ingloriously they hold their equal way:
Guiltless of fiction's magic, fancy's play,
No lightnings flash in their well-number'd speech,
Or reptile verse; and all the grace they reach,
Is with neat phrase, and words of glittering show,
To clothe the half-starv'd thought that skulks below:
So wither'd matrons, when their reign is o'er,
Seek to replace with art what nature gives no more[d].

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[d] For this translation I am indebted to the kindness of a friend, whose poetical merits are above my praise, and with whose name I was desirous to have inscribed this page of my work.

Regnier.

Regnier, if he is not more of a poet than Malherbe, appears to have at least an equal sweetness and correctness of versification. He is the versifier of good sense; but his good sense flows with vigour, spirit and ease. We are surprised to find so polished a language and air in a writer who so considerably preceded the Augustan age of Louis XIV. It would be very difficult, at least for a reader not a native of France, to discover any important particular in which Boileau has the advantage over the contemporary of Malherbe.

His poem of Macette.

Regnier has selected only those parts from the discourse of the Old-Woman in the *Roman de la Rose*, which comprise the panegyric and the maxims of rapaciousness. He feigns that a beautiful and uncorrupted girl to whom he pays his addresses, is visited by a lean and sanctified devotee of her own sex, whose person and manners bear every mark of religious austerity; and he puts into her mouth the libertine principles of John de Meun. At the arrival of this mortified dame the poet is present; but, finding the prattle of the two ladies likely to proceed to an insufferable length, he takes occasion to withdraw. He is however suddenly seized with a curiosity to overhear their discourse. He conceals himself, and in consequence becomes an ear-witness of the lessons of the grey-headed hypocrite, who among various topics does not forget to paint to her pupil in the most disgraceful colours the character of the poet. During the whole of the discourse however, she has a jealous and vigilant eye continually wandering from one part of the room to another, and at length discovers the poet in his hiding-place. This puts an abrupt close to her

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harangue: she takes a hasty leave, and defers the rest of her instructions to the next day.

It is obvious to remark with how much better a grace Regnier introduces the exhibition of these libertine lessons, than his predecessor had done. Indeed John de Meun has chosen exactly the most aukward and ill-contrived vehicle that malice itself could have supplied to an unfortunate author; and on that account his satire undoubtedly loses the greater part of its force. It is also a point of no little curiosity to compare the sluggish and dislocated style of the ancient poet, with the classical correctness and compression of Regnier in conveying the same sentiments.

Chaucer's translation of the *Roman de la Rose.*

The discourse of the Old-Woman is not to be found in Chaucer's Romaunt of the Rose. His poem, as we possess it, contains only 7698 verses, instead of 22,734, which is the extent of the original. It is probable however that Chaucer translated the whole. A breach of no less than 5883 verses occurs in the middle of Chaucer's poem, beside various errors and transpositions; and it is easy to believe that the same causes which have deprived us of so large a portion of the early part of his translation, should have occasioned the total loss of the latter half of it.

Object of the translator.

The translation of the Romance of the Rose was of the utmost importance to Chaucer's grand project, of effecting a complete coalition and incorporation of the language of his native country and the language of poetry. The Romance of the Rose was the great modern poem, which had made its appearance at so early a period. Its popularity was high, and its merit as yet undisputed. It was written in the language which, even to this time, was

the language of the court of London. Unless it were transfused into our native tongue, every lover of poetical sentiment and poetical fiction might be expected to learn French that he might read it; and, having first savoured the choicest beauties of poetry in that language, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to effect a divorce between two things which had been so early and so strongly associated in his mind. We may therefore picture to ourselves Chaucer as entering upon this task, with a concentered mind, "long meditating and beginning late," and having anxiously watched for a period of leisure accommodated to so large an undertaking. It must probably have occupied a space of two or three years at least; and Chaucer must be supposed to have regarded the completion of it as a principal epoch in the youthful engagements of his life. When he had finished it, he no doubt congratulated himself as having effected one principal step toward making the native language of England the genuine and familiar vehicle of poetical fancies, and of rich and many-coloured fiction, to the ears of his countrymen.

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COURT OF THE BLACK PRINCE AT BOURDEAUX.—WAR IN SPAIN. —DUKE OF LANCASTER DISTINGUISHES HIMSELF IN THIS WAR.—SICKNESS OF THE BLACK PRINCE.—CHAUCER'S FIRST PENSION.

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Character of the Black Prince.

IN the beginning of the year 1363 the Black Prince settled as the feudatory lord, in the principality of Aquitaine [a]. He had already acquired a character which it falls to the lot of few to obtain. He was a soldier with the lustre of a sovereign; and he had the lustre of a sovereign, unexposed to the resentment, the misconstruction and the censures, usually attendant upon that elevated rank. He had assisted in the battle of Cressy, and he had won the battle of Poitiers; two of the most considerable victories in modern times. History has scarcely fixed upon this elevated personage the shadow of a blemish. He was brave, but deliberate; he was enterprising, but sagacious and prudent. He was generous and humane, yet without weakness; he was proud, yet without insolence or cruelty. His contemporaries have been lavish in his

[a] The writ conferring this dignity is in Rymer, Vol. VI, 36 Edw. 3, Jul. 19.

praise, but he had no enemies; and, if the narrators of his actions have imputed to him any failure, they have ingenuously and unequivocally stated that it was to be ascribed to the urgency of his situation and unavoidable circumstances, and have fully acquitted him of errors of the heart. Never was man more free from every species of excess; never was man more liberal, frank, well-tempered and kind.

1361. His marriage.

This prince, after having secured his military renown in the battles above mentioned, and attained to the age of thirty-one years, became, about sixteen months before he took up his residence in Aquitaine, a husband [b]. He had seen his two younger brothers married before him; and his parents and his country felt an anxiety that so illustrious, so accomplished and blameless a personage should leave behind him some inheritor of his blood and his virtues. He accordingly married a lady near of kin to the throne, daughter, and at length heiress, to Edmund earl of Kent, youngest son to Edward I. This lady, whose name was Joan, and who was known among her contemporaries by the appellation of the Fair Maid of Kent, married for her first husband sir Thomas Holland, in her right earl of Kent, and one of the founders of the order of the Garter. By him she had two sons, Thomas and John, distinguished persons in the court of Richard II; and she became a widow 26 December 1360 [c].

At this time she was thirty-three years of age [c], a matron

[b] Rymer, Vol. VI, 35 Edv. 3, Oct. 18.

[c] Sandford, Book III, Chap. xi. Ashmole, Chap. XXV, Sect. iii, n. 14.

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of great beauty, excellent understanding and uncommon accomplishments. We shall have occasion repeatedly in the course of this history to notice her affectionate nature, the prudence of her counsels, and the graceful propriety of her conduct. It is related by one of the old chroniclers [d], that the Black Prince first addressed her in behalf of one to whom he was much attached; and that, after having urged her repeatedly on the subject, and shown himself not satisfied with her denials, she at length retorted upon him with much dignity, "that when she was under ward, she had submitted to be disposed of in marriage as those who had the superintendence of her conduct thought proper; but now, she was her own mistress, she remembered she was of the blood royal of England, and she would not cast herself away upon one beneath her; she was resolved therefore never to marry again, unless to a prince whose quality and virtues resembled his own." Prompted by this hint, he began his courtship; he admired her for her spirit and elevation of mind; and he felt in himself the beginning of a kindness, responsive to the ingenuous and noble partiality with which she regarded him.

1363. Settles in Aquitaine.

Accompanied by this princess, and with Chandos (the most distinguished of all the warriors who fought under the standard of Edward III) for his prime minister [e], he passed over to Aquitaine, and fixed his residence in Bourdeaux, where he kept his court. His manners were so prepossessing and noble, and his fame in chivalry so splendid, that his

[d] Harding, apud Barnes, Book III, Chap. vii, §. 9.

[e] Froissart, Vol. I, Chap. ccxvi.

court, in an age when chivalry was the reigning passion, could not fail to be a principal resort of all persons of generous minds and cultivated understandings. In about one year after his taking up his abode in Aquitaine, his princess bore him a son, who was named after himself Edward[f].

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1364.

His court.

The court of the Black Prince, agreeably to the fashion of those days, was not only the resort of noblemen and warriors, but also of crowned heads. He numbered among his visitors Peter king of Cyprus, James king of Majorca and Charles king of Navarre[g]. In the summer of 1366 a new and a memorable guest came to increase his glory, Peter king of Castille and Leon[h]. This king repaired to Bourdeaux as a suppliant; he had been driven from his dominions by a fierce and rapacious swarm of foreign outlaws, and he came to intreat the prince of Wales, as a warrior not less generous than brave, to redress the injuries he had suffered, and restore him to his throne.

1366. Visited by Peter king of Castille.

Modern history of Spain.

Spain was a country, in the dawn of modern European history, singularly interesting to all its neighbours. It had been entirely conquered by the Saracens about a century after the commencement of the Mahometan era; and these victorious enthusiasts, having overrun the half of France, were only checked in their career by the military prowess of Charles Martel in 732. In Spain they erected a caliphate; and the court of Cordova was for a long time one of the principal centres of Saracenic splendour and

f Froissart, Chap. ccxviii.

g Froissart, Chap. ccxviii, ccxxxv. Thorn, A. D. 1366, apud X Scriptores.

h Froissart, Chap. ccxxxi.

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learning. The unfortunate Christians, as many of them as preferred independence to subjugation, took refuge in the mountains of the Asturias. Here, safe from the oppression of their insolent conquerors, they assumed courage by degrees, and sallied out upon the enemy. Disciplined by adversity and contention, they daily improved in hardiment, while their foes became enervated by luxury. The achievements of the Christian warriors in Spain are among the most extraordinary in the annals of mankind. They gradually gained ground upon the Saracens; and, in an unintermitted struggle of five centuries, redeemed the most considerable part of the peninsula from their yoke, and shut them up in a few of the southernmost provinces. Christian Spain then became divided into a variety of sovereignties; the kingdom of Asturias, of Leon, of Arragon, of Portugal and of Castille; each more eminent champion acquiring for himself an independent territory, and laying the foundation of a new dynasty. The smaller sovereignties however were gradually swallowed up in the greater; and the principal monarch of the peninsula, though styling himself king of Castille and Leon, might at this time with sufficient propriety have been styled king of Spain, there remaining of the Christian principalities which have since been annexed to the dominions of his descendants only the little kingdom of Arragon. Peter, the fugitive suppliant at the court of the Black Prince, was the lineal representative of St. Ferdinand, who about a century before had united in his own person the monarchies of Castille and Leon, and wrested from the Moors the opulent cities of Seville and Cordova.

Reign of Peter.

Peter, the prince with whose history we are at present concerned, had undoubtedly degenerated from the virtues

of his ancestors. His adversaries charged him with having murdered his wife that he might marry his mistress[i]; and it is certain that he was a slave to avarice, and practised a multitude of vexations upon his subjects that he might swell his treasures[k]. By the acts of which he was guilty, and in some degree by the artifice of the dynasty which finally superseded him in the throne, he has acquired the odious appellation of Peter the Cruel. Encouraged by the unpopularity of his administration, his natural brother, Henry of Transtamare, aspired to the crown. One of the circumstances which occurred in the growing animosity of the possessor of, and the aspirant to, the crown, deserves to be mentioned as an evidence of the barbarous manners then prevailing in Spain, and so far serving as an extenuation of some acts of Peter; which, though revolting to us, were seen with less aggravation by his contemporaries. Henry, instigated as it is said by the grandees of Castille, undertook to expostulate with the king upon the impropriety of some of his measures; he expressed himself with warmth; and one of the counsellors of Peter, who happened to be present, came forward to vindicate the conduct of his master. The bastard grew exasperated at this opposition, drew his dagger, and laid the minister dead at the feet of his sovereign. For this conduct he was obliged to fly from court, and took refuge in the neighbouring kingdom

Ambitious views of Henry of Transtamare.

Goes into exile.

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[i] The queen was unfaithful to his bed, and one of the present noble families of Spain boasts of being the issue of his illicit amours. Voltaire, Histoire Générale, Chap. LXV.

[k] Memoires de Du Guesclin, Chap. xiv. xv. apud Collection Universelle.

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of Arragon. The king of Arragon received him with much kindness, and (as the historian with perfect *naiveté* goes on to assure us) was astonished to find, from Henry's narration, "that Peter persecuted him, and obliged him to fly his country, for having taken the liberty to represent to him the horror which every one felt at his repeated acts of cruelty[l]."

His cabals.

Henry was now more earnest than ever to take the place of his brother on the throne of Castille. He practised with the king of Arragon; he gained the support of Charles V. king of France; and he prevailed upon the pope to excommunicate and pronounce a sentence of deposition against Peter[m]. The times were favourable to his enterprise. The long wars between France and England, left at their conclusion a multitude of military adventurers in the former of these kingdoms, indisposed to every other occupation, and having no longer a legitimate opportunity for exercising that to which they were accustomed These men refused all the laws of subordination, and subsisted by acts of plunder. The king of France therefore willingly entered into the scheme of drawing them off upon an expedition into Spain; and, to cover his real purpose, it was given out that the object was a crusade against the Moors of Grenada[n]. The Black Prince became the dupe of this pretence, and piously encouraged the individuals among these outlaws, who had served under him, or were natives

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[l] Mémoires de Du Guesclin, Chap. xx.

[m] Froissart, Chap. ccxxx.

[n] Froissart, ubi supra. Mémoires de Du Guesclin, Chap. xxi.

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1366. Obtains the crown.

of England or Aquitaine, to engage in the expedition, which was headed by the celebrated adventurer Bertrand du Guesclin. The undertaking was successful; Peter was taken by surprise; and, after a short struggle, was obliged to seek his safety in flight. He first endeavoured to engage the king of Portugal to espouse his cause°; and, being repulsed there, he immediately resorted to the court of the Black Prince at Bourdeaux.

Favourable reception of Peter at Bourdeaux.

This renowned hero felt as the heir of one of the first monarchies in Europe might be expected to feel. If Peter had been expelled by the resentment and concerted revolt of his countrymen, it may be believed that Edward, full of the high notions he derived from his illustrious ancestry, would have decided that kings are not to be arraigned at the bar of their rebellious subjects, and would have condemned their insolence. But that a king should be driven from his dominions, not by the provoked insurrection of the nation he governed, but by the venal hostility of foreigners the burthen and scourge of their native soil, he regarded as an example odious and intolerable. He also felt with double fervour in the present case, as he had unintentionally been made an instrument in the mischievous enterprise.

Views of the Black Prince.

Under the prejudices of chivalry, to restore a lawful king to his throne, and to expel a body of unprincipled adventurers who had spread like locusts over his country, was one of the most glorious enterprises in which a great military leader could engage. The war in which Edward

° Mémoires de Du Guesclin, Chap. xix.

CHAP. XXVII. 1366. had already so illustriously signalised himself was of a doubtful character; it was a contention between, let us say, two equal pretenders to a throne. It was not so much; Edward had been compelled by the force of truth repeatedly to acknowledge John for a king, and thus to condemn the cause in which he fought. To vindicate right, to assist the oppressed, and to beat down the boasts of successful wrong, the offices to which he was now invited, were the favourite pursuits of chivalry. Thus allured, he thought not of the actions and dispositions of Peter; he saw in him nothing but his illustrious ancestry, the splendour of the throne to which he was born, and the inheritor of that throne an unhappy fugitive, partly through the error of the man to whom he now sued for relief.

Undertakes the restoration of Peter.

Influenced by these considerations, the Black Prince gave a favourable and cordial reception to the exiled monarch, and immediately sent to consult his father upon the propriety of an expedition to redress his wrong. Edward III, who had the magnanimity to contemplate the rising fame of a dutiful and affectionate son without envy, desired nothing more than to see his reputation increased by the successful execution of so generous an enterprise. He therefore immediately returned an answer to that effect, and sent the duke of Lancaster to Bourdeaux to concert with his brother the detail of the undertaking, and the extent of the supplies it would be necessary or practicable to draw from England[p].

[p] Barnes, Book IV, Chap. i, §. 9.

Preparations for the expedition were now made with great diligence, and the Black Prince began his march in the month of January [q]. He had no sooner been informed of the expulsion of Peter, than he peremptorily recalled as many of the French troops serving under Henry of Transtamare as he was entitled to influence [r]; and these soldiers, who understood that the Black Prince purposed to march into Castille, and who desired nothing more eagerly than to serve under their tried and honoured commander, were not less prompt to set out upon their march to Aquitaine, than he was strict to summon them. Du Guesclin, finding his ranks greatly thinned by this desertion, wintered in France [r], and, having recruited his army, took the field in the ensuing spring with 120,000 men [s]. CHAP. XXVII. 1367. Begins his march.

The duke of Lancaster commanded the reinforcements from England; and, having joined his elder brother, they entered the passes of the Pyrenees about the end of February [t]. In this march the Black Prince divided his army into three bands, and gave the command of the van to the duke of Lancaster [u]. The young duke had for his coadjutor lord Chandos, under whose eye, and assisted by whose talents and experience, it was reasonable to believe that he would make great proficiency in the art of slaughter, an art at this time valued and prized above all others. In their march they were aided by the compulsory alliance of the king of Navarre; and, their enterprise being thus facilitated, they passed in safety the valley Is joined by the duke of Lancaster. Passes the Pyrenees.

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q Froissart, Chap. ccxxxvi.
r Froissart, Chap. ccxxxiii.
s Barnes, Chap. ii, §. 11.
t Froissart, Chap. ccxxxvi, ccxxxvii.
u Froissart, Chap. ccxxxvii.

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of Roncesvalles, famed for the fabulous exploits of Roland, or Orlando,

> When Charlemagne with all his peerage fell
> By Fontarabia.
>
> PARADISE LOST, Book I, ver. 586.

At sight of this spot no doubt their hearts panted with hope, with awe and emulation; and the younger knights in particular felt their circulation augmented, with a sense of the proud career in which they were engaged, and a thirst for immortality.

Enters the kingdom of Castille.

After some pause in the fertile plains of Navarre, the Black Prince crossed the Ebro, and entered the territory of Old Castille. The situation in which he soon found himself here was similar to that in which he had been placed at the battle of Poitiers, and to that of his father at the victory of Cressy. He had advanced into an enemy's country, was cut off from all supply, and reduced to the greatest extremity [1]; and, had the enemy exerted the sagacity and resolution to close him round, to harass him with petty attacks, and abstain from a general action, his expedition must have ended in complete discomfiture. This temerity however was in some degree the necessary consequence of the state of the European powers in this age, whose resources were speedily exhausted, and whose soldiers were for the most part engaged for a very short period. And, allowance having been made for their apparent rashness in the onset, both he and his father, in the instances alluded to, will be found to have conducted them-

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[1] Mémoires de Du Guesclin, Chap. XXII.

selves in the conclusion of the enterprise with singular prudence, coolness, ability and heroism. CHAP. XXVII. 1367.

Battle of Najara.

The fate of the campaign for the restoration of the exiled king was decided by a battle fought on the third of April near Najara a town on the Ebro[y]. The Spanish usurper was encouraged to try the event of a battle, by the fortuitous success which had attended him in a partial conflict, about a fortnight before[z]. The duke of Lancaster had still the command of one of the divisions of the English army, and had still with him lord Chandos as his Mentor and guide, who had before officiated in the same character to the Black Prince. A moment before the battle was joined, John of Gaunt said, turning to one of the sons of the earl of Warwick who was near him, Sir William, there is the enemy; you shall see me to-day prove myself a true knight, or you shall see me lost in the attempt. Their wing of the army seems to have had no mean share in the action, as they were opposed to Du Guesclin, and the French soldiers of fortune, who had placed the bastard upon the throne. The Spaniards, who formed the main body of the enemy, though enrolled from an heroic nation, were for the most part new recruits, and by no means equal to the Gallic veterans. It is also probable that they did not engage with perfect alacrity, nor feel themselves perfectly satisfied to cooperate with a gang of foreign freebooters the rudeness of whose manners they had by this time sufficiently witnessed, to place an usurper upon the

[y] Froissart, Chap. ccxli. Memoires de Du Guesclin, Chap. XXIII.

[z] Froissart, Chap. ccxxxix. Memoires de Du Guesclin, Chap. XXII.

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throne of their lawful sovereign. The battle however was on the whole contested with considerable obstinacy; but ended in the total defeat of Henry, with the capture of his commander in chief and of the most distinguished officers among his French allies. The gallantry of the duke of Lancaster in this action was much celebrated; and it was his division of the army that took Du Guesclin prisoner, who, according to the customs of that age, became the property of Chandos, and was afterward redeemed for a ransom of one hundred thousand franks[a].

Feelings with which the news of this victory were received in England.

The rejoicings in England on account of the victory of Najara were singularly great. The city of London was adorned in various parts with triumphal arches; the fronts of the houses in the principal avenues were covered with tapestry; and the citizens feasted every guest who chose to resort to their plentiful tables, in the streets[b]. After the great achievements which had of late years been accomplished in France, it was thought the consummation of glory to this country, that the sons of her king should thus become the good geniuses of Europe, raising the prostrate, subduing rebellion, delivering one of her noblest countries from the yoke of a lawless banditti, and replacing a rightful sovereign on the throne of his heroic ancestors.

Unfortunate issue of the expedition.

The issue of the campaign however was eminently unfortunate for the nation which thus exulted in its apparent success. The battle of Najara was indeed decisive of the fate of war. The Castillians, who had never entered

[a] Froissart, Chap. ccxliv.

[b] Barnes, Chap. ii, §. 19. Stow, Survey of London: of watches.

heartily into the rebellion against Peter, promptly and willingly returned to their duty. The bastard Henry immediately took to flight, sheltering himself first in Arragon, and afterward in France. Every thing seemed to bear the most prosperous aspect, except to the generous mediators by whose interference the whole revolution had been effected.

Hypocritical behaviour of the restored sovereign.

The character of Peter, whatever might be its merits in other respects, was certainly in an eminent degree disfigured with the vices of avarice, ingratitude, and bad faith. In these points he bore a considerable resemblance to his successor in the close of the fifteenth century, Ferdinand the Catholic; who, celebrated as he has been by venal or depraved historians for sagacity and wisdom, knew no other policy than craft, possessed no other superiority over his neighbours than coldness of heart, and placed his infamous vanity in trifling with the most sacred engagements, and overreaching and making a dupe of ingenuous credulity *.

Previously to the expedition into Spain, the Black Prince had represented to Peter in the most unequivocal manner the inability under which he laboured, in the existing state of his finances, to sustain the expence of such a preparation. Peter in reply undertook amply to remunerate the captains and soldiers who enlisted in the war, if ever he should be restored to the throne of Castille; and with this engagement the prince was satisfied. The whole being thus adjusted, the prince and the king of Castille

* Hume, Chap. XXVII.

CHAP. XXVII. 1367. represented to the different knights and lords who were preparing to march, the urgency of the case, and intreated them, by mortgages, or whatever other means occurred to them, to provide for their present expenditure; the prince pledging himself for the king of Castille that he would see them faithfully repaid [d].

No sooner did Peter behold the object of the enterprise completed, the army of his enemies totally routed, their general a prisoner, and the pretender in banishment, than he resolved to evade his engagements, and send away his deliverer baffled and disappointed. He regarded however with no less fear than repugnance, the hero to whom he was indebted for every thing that he possessed. He meditated therefore how most effectually to cajole and delude his generous ally. He was the first to mention the pecuniary obligations under which he was placed. He represented that it was impossible to raise so large a sum as was justly due to his allies, without his own personal interference and importunity. Seville was the most distant of the considerable towns in his dominions, and he held out this as the place upon which, for its opulence, his hopes of acquitting himself were placed. After having resided with his benefactor for three weeks in Burgos, his capital, he recommended to him to conduct his army to the vicinity of Valladolid, being probably secretly led to this preference by the greater insalubrity of the climate; and promised to return with all possible expedition, bringing with

[d] Froissart, Chap. ccxxxii, ccxxxiii.

him the treasures which would be necessary to redeem his engagements [e]. CHAP. XXVII.

The Black Prince demeaned himself with all possible honour to his treacherous ally, and, judging of the intentions of Peter from the liberality of his own heart, waited a considerable time with the most unsuspecting patience. Peter however took no steps toward the acquittal of his debt; and, if he extorted money from his subjects, it was with no view of remitting a pistole of it to the English commander. Here on the contrary he suffered him to languish during the unwholesome months of June, July and August [f], when in this climate the atmosphere during the day is sultry, stagnant and insufferable, and in the night the traveller often shivers with cold. If the troops had been in motion, the effect of the season would probably have been less fatal to them. When the body is in exercise, the mind alert, and the scene continually changing, there is a principle in the constitution of man which enables it to throw off many inconveniences. But the army of the Black Prince was in the worst species of inaction, that stagnant and sickly condition of the soul which is produced by tedious, monotonous and fruitless expectation. Add to this, they were ill supplied with the conveniences and necessaries of life. Accordingly, if their commander, irritated at the base treatment he had sustained, had felt disposed to extort by force what ought to have been paid him with readiness and gratitude, his army

1367. Sickness of the English army.

[e] Froissart, Chap. ccxlii. Memoires de Du Guesclin, Chap. XXIV.
[f] Froissart, Chap. ccxliii.

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would have been found too feeble to second his resentment. This his insidious ally perfectly knew; and he felt a diabolical joy in witnessing the triumph of craft and falshood over integrity, ingenuousness and honour.

Malady of the Black Prince.

But what was worse than all the rest, the Black Prince, when he retired out of Spain, carried with him the ruins only of a shattered constitution. He had probably urged his corporeal strength too far in his preceding campaigns. The climate of the heart of Spain in its hottest months completed his destruction. It was indeed principally the vexation of his mind at witnessing the unworthiness of the man he had served, that laid him naked as it were to all the hostility of the season. The more chivalrous and disinterested was the enterprise he undertook, the less could he endure to see it leading in its sequel to the indulgence of the basest passions of the human heart. Thus did one of the purest and most exalted of human characters according to the mode of the age in which he lived, fall a prey to a wretch of the narrowest and most sordid views, and who was stupid enough to pride himself in the base ascendancy which he thus obtained. Edward survived his expedition into Spain almost nine years; but, instead of gradually shaking off the fatal effects it left behind, he continually became more listless, languid and debilitated, till at last his spark of life was extinguished by an almost imperceptible decay.

John of Gaunt knight of the Garter.

From the records that at present exist, the time cannot be precisely ascertained at which John of Gaunt was elected into his father's newly instituted corps of knights companions of the order of the Garter. The name of Lionel duke of Clarence appears however, together with

that of John duke of Lancaster, among those who were first substituted in the room of the original founders[g]: and, as these two princes were nearly of an age, and received the honours of knighthood and the title of duke together, it is highly probable that the ensigns of the Garter were conferred upon them at the same time; which must therefore have been before the month of October 1368, when the duke of Clarence died[h], and probably before the month of May in that year[i], when he set out upon a journey to Italy from which he never returned.

Duke of Clarence dies.

Chaucer's first pension.

It is during the period of the duke of Lancaster's absence in the Spanish war, that the first official notice occurs, in our records, of the name of Chaucer. On the twentieth of June in this year he obtained an annual pension of twenty marks, for services performed and to be performed, granted to him for life, or till the king should otherwise dispose of him[k].

Its value.

It is reasonable to pause here for an instant to consider the value of this pension. This will be sufficiently illustrated by the adjustment of two questions; first, the quantity of silver expressed by the words used in the grant, twenty marks; and secondly, a general comparison of the price of provisions and the necessaries of life, as they stood in the time of Chaucer, with the price which they bear at present. I will take for my guides in this calculation, bishop Fleetwood's work, entitled Chronicon

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[g] Ashmole, Chap. XXVI, Sect. iv.

[h] Sandford, Book III, Chap. xii.

[i] Rymer, Tom. VI, 42 E. 3, May 10.

[k] Appendix, No. III.

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Preciosum, and sir George Shuckburgh Evelyn's Table exhibiting the prices of various necessaries of life from the year 1050, printed in the Philosophical Transactions for the Year 1798.

According to the first of these authors, a pound-weight of silver continued from the year 1353 to the year 1421 to be coined into twenty-five shillings, and began in the year 1603 to be coined into sixty-two shillings, as at present. Hence it follows, that the person who received, during the first of these intervals, the sum of money called a mark (thirteen shillings and four pence of that time), actually received a weight of silver, which under the denomination of money has now for two centuries amounted to thirty-three shillings nearly.

By sir George Shuckburgh Evelyn's Table it further appears that the average price of the various necessaries of life in 1350, compared with the estimated average price in 1800, is in the proportion of 77 to 562. The result then of this statement is, that the sum, at the first of these periods denominated a mark, or thirty-three shillings of our money, ought to be considered as equivalent, for the ordinary purposes of life, to about £. 12 of the present time. In other words, the money of the period of Chaucer, taking in the joint consideration of weight of silver and price of provisions, was equal to about eighteen times the money of the same denomination in our own age. Chaucer's pension therefore of twenty marks will be properly represented to our apprehension, by a revenue of £. 240 *per annum*.

Illustrations.

It may be instructive to add here a few examples of the gratuities bestowed by Edward III. upon persons of dif-

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ferent classes and professions in society, for the purpose of illustrating the degree of estimation which it was the habit of these times to annex to such classes or professions. We find him granting in the year 1345 the sum of sixpence *per diem* for life to a certain apothecary [*apothecarius*], who had attended him in a dangerous illness during an expedition into Scotland[l]; and, some years before, a pension to the court-physician of £. 100 *per annum*[m]. To a person who had brought to him the first news of the victory at Neville's Cross, he granted one hundred shillings *per annum* for life[n]; and to another, on the ground of having first carried the intelligence to the council at London, a gratuity of £. 10[o]. The sum of forty marks *per annum* was given by the king to the man who brought him intelligence of the birth of his eldest son; £. 10 *per annum* as a provision for his nurse; and ten marks *per annum* to his rocker[p]. One hundred shillings is the amount of the annuity, granted to a lady supposed to have been afterward the wife of Chaucer, the cause in consideration of which it was granted being that she had been one of the maids of honour [*domicellæ*] to the queen: the grant bears date a few months after the queen's decease[q]: the pension of the same date, granted to the maids of honour of the highest class is ten marks[q]. The salaries of the judges, as we have seen, were about forty marks[r]: but there is reason to think that they had certain perquisites

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[l] Rymer, Tom. V, 19 Edv. 3, Oct. 8.

[m] Ditto, Tom. IV, 1 Edv. 3, Mar. 10.

[n] Ditto, Tom. V. 21 Edv. 3, Mar. 10.

[o] Ditto, 20 Edv. 3, Dec. 12.

[p] Ashmole, Chap. XXVI, Sect. iii.

[q] Appendix, No.

[r] Vol. I, Chap. XVIII, p. 368.

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and boons, which tended considerably to increase the gross amount of their revenue; this may be regarded as pretty strongly corroborated to us by a line of Chaucer formerly quoted:

The judgé dremeth how his plees be spedde[s].

Each of the dreamers mentioned in this passage of Chaucer, dreams of the thing about which he was anxious when awake, and fancies that it turns out in the manner that he then wished: the judge therefore would certainly not have found a place in this enumeration were it not that his emoluments depended either upon the number of the causes he tried, or upon the way in which he decided them.

Montagu, afterward earl of Salisbury, for his services in the overthrow of Roger Mortimer, was rewarded with an income of £. 1000 *per annum*[t]; and, some years after, his younger brother, sir Edward Montagu had a grant of a pension of £. 100 *per annum*[t]. The annuity granted to Robert of Artois, first instigator of the wars of Edward III. for the crown of France, was of the amount of twelve hundred marks[u]. The king likewise conferred a pension of £. 1500 *per annum* upon the duke of Brabant for life[x]; and the pension of Baliol, subsequently to his surrender of all his claims upon the crown of Scotland, was £. 2000[y]. This was also the amount of the allowance settled upon Joan, wife to David Bruce the reigning king of Scotland,

[s] Parliament of Birds, ver. 101. See Vol. I, Chap. XXI, p. 489.
[t] Collins, Peerage of England: duke of Manchester.
[u] Rymer, Tom. IV, 11 Edv. 3, May 5.
[x] Ditto, Tom. 5, 13 Edv. 3, Dec. 28.
[y] Ditto, Tom. VI, 31 Edv. 3, Feb. 4.

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and sister to Edward III[a]. The income of Philippa queen of England was £. 15000 *per annum*[a]. In the writ conveying to John of Gaunt a certain portion of duke Henry's inheritance, which had been reserved till one of the daughters, coheiresses, should have issue, the value of the lands hereby assigned, independently of the property which had fallen to him at the death of his father-in-law (and the other part of which he took possession at the death of the duchess Matilda), is estimated at little less than £. 3000 *per annum*[b]. Lastly, the ransom of Bruce, husband to queen Joan, after eleven years imprisonment, during which he was constantly attended by the royal matron[c], was fixed at one hundred thousand marks[d]; and that of John king of France at three millions of crowns, each crown, by the conditions of treaty, to be equal to the

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[a] Rymer, Tom. IV, 2 Edv. 3, May 1.

[a] Ditto, 2 Edv. 3, May 5. The sum here put down is undoubtedly too high, but it is perhaps impossible to ascertain the exact value of these grants. The word in the instrument of dower, both to Joan and Philippa, answering to £, is not *libra*, but *librata terræ* & *redditus*. This term is explained by Spelman as equivalent to an acre; and an acre of land, according to Fleetwood, was worth at this time on an average three pence *per annum* (Chronicon Preciosum, Chap. IV). This would reduce the value of queen Philippa's income to £. 262 : 10 : — *per annum*, and of queen Joan's to £. 25 *per annum*. Cowel, on the contrary, rates the *denarius terræ* as an acre, and consequently the *libra*, or *librata terræ*, as two hundred and forty acres. This would raise queen Philippa's revenue to £. 63,000 per annum, £. 7000 above the revenue of the whole kingdom. Ducange, Glossarium, in voc. is inclined to consider the *librata terræ* as signifying so much land as would yield a revenue of £. 1 *per annum*; and Ducange's authority is followed in the text.

[b] Rot. Fin. 35 Edv. 3, m. 23, apud Collins, History of John of Gaunt.

[c] Hollinshed, Scotland, A. D. 1358.

[d] Rymer, Tom. VI, 31 Edv. 6, Oct. 3.

CHAP. XXVII. 1367. fourth part of a mark, English money[e]. To complete our view of this subject, let us add that the ordinary revenue of the crown, from the time of Henry III[f]. to Henry V, a period of about two hundred years, appears from an authentic document, taken at the close of this period[g], to have been nearly £. 55,714 : 10 : 10 *per annum*.

The result of these documents, and of others which will hereafter be produced, tends to confirm us in the opinion, that the different ranks of society were treated with somewhat more inequality in Chaucer's time than at present. The pension granted to sir Edward Montagu the younger son of a noble family is of nearly eight times, and that granted to his elder brother seventy-five times, the amount of that bestowed upon Chaucer; while the salaries of the judges only double his annuity. The pension granted to lord Montagu, which, estimated according to the proportion above laid down, is worth £. 18,000 *per annum* of our money, and that to the titular king of Scots, worth £. 36,000, would undoubtedly in the present times be admitted to be princely; lord Montagu's was so much clear addition to his hereditary estate. The fragment of John of Gaunt's inheritance abovementioned, was equivalent to £. 54,000 *per annum* of our money. The disbursements of Thomas earl of Lancaster, great-uncle to the princess Blanche, for one year (the year 1313), are stated to have amounted, on the score of his houshold establishment

[e] Rymer, 34 Edv. 3, May 8.
[g] Rymer, Tom. X, 9 Hen. 5.
[f] Hume, Chap. XIX.

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alone, to £. 7957 : 13 : 4[h], making of our money £. 148,238[i]. His wealth therefore must be supposed to have been at least equal to that of the late duke of Orleans, whose annual income was computed at £. 300,000 sterling. The whole revenue of the kingdom however, estimated according to the same rule, scarcely exceeded the present value of one million sterling. From these premises we may form some judgment, how formidable opponents the great barons of the realm must have been found, when they set themselves in hostility to the sovereign.

Thomas earl of Lancaster, the occupier of this immense wealth, was dissatisfied with his lot, and became the head of the barons who took advantage of the imbecility of Edward II. At length he was conveyed prisoner to his own castle of Pomfret; and, having been summarily adjudged to death, was placed upon a lean jade without a bridle, with a rusty and torn hat on his head, and thus conveyed, amidst the insults and peltings of a brutish multitude, to a hill without the town, where his head was struck off by the executioner[k]. Many miracles were afterward wrought at his tomb[l]; and he was nearly created a saint by the Roman pontiff.

Conclusion.

It is sufficiently observable that this first court-favour of a pecuniary sort, which has come to our knowledge as

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[h] Stow, Survey of London: of orders and customs.

[i] This was erroneously stated in a former chapter (Chapter VII, p. 104), upon the authority of Anderson's History of Commerce. A similar misstatement occurs, Chap. XVII, p. 368.

[k] Pakington, apud Leland, Collectanea, Tom. I, p. 669.

[l] Ditto, p. 670.

CHAP. XXVII. 1367. having been conferred upon Chaucer, was granted during the absence of his patron, John of Gaunt, on the continent: he sailed from England in the beginning of January, and did not return till the decline of the year. Thus we have Edward III. himself, in the first page, as it were, of our official documents for the life of Chaucer, refuting the invidious insinuation of certain modern critics, that not he, but John of Gaunt, was the original patron and encourager of the singular talents and admirable genius of the father of English poetry.

The year, the events of which have formed the principal subject of this chapter, is rendered further remarkable by having given birth to two English sovereigns, Richard II. son of the Black Prince, and Henry IV. son and heir to John of Gaunt and the duchess Blanche.

CHAP. XXVIII.

WAR WITH FRANCE.—DUKE OF LANCASTER COMMANDS IN PICARDY.—DEATH OF THE DUCHESS BLANCHE.

IT was the policy of Charles V. king of France, surnamed by his countrymen the Wise, that in 1369 disturbed the peace between the two crowns, so happily established by the treaty of Bretigni in 1360. The pretence for his conduct we shall presently have occasion to assign; the motive was the declining age of Edward III, and the infirm health of the Black Prince. It was natural that a king of France should seek the earliest opportunity to avenge the victories which those princes had gained in his dominions, and to recover the territories which the pressure of his affairs and the frowns of fortune had obliged his predecessor to yield in full sovereignty to his adversaries. It was with that contempt of the solemnity of oaths, the clear construction of obligations, and the sacredness of public engagements, which characterises the proceedings of the directors of nations, that Charles V. endeavoured to varnish his conduct. CHAP. XXVIII.

1367. Critical situation of the Black Prince.

When the Black Prince returned to his government of Aquitaine, he brought back with him the army he had so

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successfully commanded in Spain; but, victorious as they had been, he brought them back abridged in their numbers, sickly, disheartened, impoverished, and destitute of almost all the necessaries of existence. Peter king of Castille, whom they had restored to his throne, had engaged amply to remunerate their services; but he had disdained even the appearance of making an exertion for that purpose. Edward, their commander, had made himself the security for Peter that they should be fully paid; and, the principal in the business having failed, the obligation seemed now to devolve upon the second. The attachment which even the lawless regiments, who had proved themselves the scourge and terror of more peaceful scenes, had displayed to their gallant commander, was memorable: at his beck they had resorted to him from the standard of Du Guesclin; they had followed him, famished, hopeless, but unrepining, in his return out of Spain; and the Black Prince's subjects of Aquitaine having complained of the

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depredations to which their necessities compelled them, they at his command quitted his dominions, unpaid, and withdrew into the adjacent provinces of France[a]. Edward could not bear that they should be thus grievously injured by the services to which he had led them, and by the failure of engagements of which he had been the surety.

Hearth-money.

In this emergency the bishop of Rodez, chancellor of Aquitaine, urged the prince to impose a tax upon his French subjects, under the name of hearth-money, of one

[a] Froissart, Chap. ccxliv.

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livre *per* hearth, which it was computed would yield an annual sum of one million two hundred thousand livres. Chandos, constable of the duchy, the most virtuous as well as the most gallant of the soldiers of the prince, is said to have opposed this advice; either because he thought the prosperity of the peaceful subject a matter of higher consideration than the providing for these bands of adventurers, or that he foresaw the fatal consequences to which this policy would lead. The prince however persisted, and the tax was solemnly proposed to the states of the different provinces within his government [b].

Taxation was a measure, in these early times, of comparatively rare and novel practice. It was inconsistent with the original and genuine spirit of the feudal system. That system sufficiently provided for the expences of the first magistrate by his hereditary demesnes, by the prescribed contributions annexed to the great feudal incidents, and by the established and unremunerated services to be rendered in war by the holders of knight's fees and baronages. In proportion as the feudal system declined, these resources became inadequate. There was consequently a crisis in government in Europe, between the destruction of the feudal provisions, and the rise of the more modern method of taxation. The recollection of this will serve as a clue to many of the political transactions of the fourteenth and following centuries.

Discontents in Aquitaine.

The proposition of the hearth-money was variously received in the different states or parliaments of the English

[b] Froissart, ubi supra.

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provinces in France. By the lower classes it was viewed as an insupportable incumbrance. Among the lords and holders of feudal estates various cabals were formed against it. It is observed, that in the districts nearest to Bourdeaux, the seat of government, and where the influence of the popular manners of the Black Prince was most sensibly felt, it met with scarcely any opposition; while in the remoter parts, where there was less opportunity for the growth of this sentiment of personal attachment, and where therefore the inhabitants retained with less adulteration the genuine character of Frenchmen, it was ordinarily regarded with antipathy and abhorrence[c]. In a general assembly of the provinces of the prince's government held at Niort, several of the lords of Gascony remonstrated forcibly against the measure, and at length withdrew in discontent; their principal leaders shortly after resorting as refugees to Paris, to the court of Charles V[d].

Secession of certain of the French barons.

Various causes, as always happens in similar cases, co-operated to swell the tide of disaffection which now manifested itself against the English government. However popular were the manners of the prince of Wales, however equitable his temper and generous his sentiments, he found it impossible to satisfy all in a nation of men born the subjects of his natural enemy. Many of the nobles were suspicious; they saw, or thought they saw, themselves slighted, and others preferred before them; and they began to cast looks of impatience and affection toward the young

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[c] Froissart, Chap. ccxlvi. [d] Ditto, Chap. ccxliv.

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1369. Black Prince summoned by Charles V. to answer the complaints of his vassals.

monarch of the realm of France, the reputation of whose government became every day more grave and imposing.

It is extremely probable that this monarch had secretly from the first fomented these discontents; it is certain that he contemplated the appearance of the refugees at his court with undisguised pleasure. Meanwhile he affected an extreme reluctance to come to extremities with his "dear nephew," the prince of Wales, and seemed finally to be prevailed upon only by the importunities of the malcontents to take part in their grievances[e]. At length however, in January 1369, he dispatched a summons to the Black Prince, under the style of prince of Wales and Aquitaine, to appear before him as his sovereign lord, to answer certain complaints of his vassals[f].

This could amount to nothing less than a declaration of war. By the treaty of Bretigni it was solemnly stipulated that France should renounce for ever all claim of sovereignty over the territories ceded to the English. Nothing therefore could be more audacious and unprincipled, when tried by the dictates of morality, than the proceeding of Charles V. His plea, so far as he condescended to colour his measures with the technicalities of justice, appears to have been that, though the treaty of Bretigni had now been concluded more than eight years, the stipulated renunciations had never been executed[g]. Yet this circumstance had been solely caused by his artificial delays.

[e] Froissart, ubi supra.

[f] Ditto, Chap. ccxlvii.

[g] Ditto, Chap. ccxlvi.

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Edward III, confident in the high and merited reputation of himself and his son, entertained not the slightest suspicion of the new king of France, and did not allow himself to imagine that the French monarchy which had repeatedly been humbled at his feet, would ever dare willingly to unfurl its banners against him.

War.

Intelligence of the hostile and insulting proceedings of Charles V. being brought to the court of London, Edward III, by the advice of his parliament, resumed the stile of king of France, and began vigorously to prepare for war [h]. He saw that he had been deceived in relying upon the terror of his arms flowing from the past, and that he must now contend afresh for the monuments of his glory and the acquisitions of his prowess. Reasoning perhaps on chivalrous principles, he disdained to measure himself with the youthful tenant of the throne of France; and, while he appeared copious in measures of precaution and defence, he left the active direction of the campaign to his sons. Charles V. on the other hand had nothing of the spirit of chivalry: he contented himself with the wisdom of the cabinet, and never once during his reign appeared at the head of his armies. In the present instance he threatened the British dominions with an invasion, and obliged Edward III. to adopt measures of prevention on the side both of Scotland [i] and Ireland [k]; at the same time that, having gained intelligence of the defenceless state of the English possessions in Picardy, he pushed forward a strong

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[h] Rymer, Tom. VI, 43 Edv. 3, June 3.

[i] Froissart, Chap. ccliii.

[k] Dugdale, Vol. II, art. Fauconberg.

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and rapid body of troops, and seized upon Abbeville, St. Valori and Crotoy, before Edward III. could take the proper steps for their relief[l].

Duke of Lancaster commands in Picardy.

At length the duke of Lancaster, with a small but select army, sailed from Dover, and by his appearance at Calais, put an end to the real or ostensible preparations for invading the dominions of England. The duke of Burgundy, brother to the king of France, and intended admiral of his fleet, marched from Harfleur, its rendezvous, to watch and counteract the motions of the English general. The principal companion of the duke of Lancaster in this expedition was the illustrious sir Walter Manny, one of the original founders of the order of the Garter, and a gallant and most distinguished coadjutor of Edward III. in all his expeditions into France[m].

Cautious system of the French monarch.

Here were displayed the first symptoms of the military system of Charles V. Indifferent to the brilliant scenes of actual service in which he took no part, he fixed a stern and stedfast eye upon consequences and results. The maxims of war then fashionable were calculated to incite him to signalise the first campaign of his reign by some memorable achievement. The French army is said by seven times to have outnumbered the forces of the duke of Lancaster[n]; and therefore to the ardent and enterprising spirit of a young man it would have appeared as if they had it in their power to trample down and annihilate the English by a single effort. But the king of France

[l] Froissart, Chap. cclii.

[m] Ditto, Chap. cclxvii, cclxix.

[n] Ditto, Chap. cclxix.

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thought otherwise. He remembered the discomfitures of Cressy and Poitiers; and he knew that the present commander of the enemy burned with the most painful desire to place his name upon the same scroll with those of his father and his brother. Charles V. saw that the inhabitants of Picardy and Aquitaine earnestly desired to return under the sway of their native sovereign; and he was convinced that nothing could tend more strongly to that purpose, than his carefully providing for them time and opportunities for that purpose, and wasting the strength of the adversary in inactive campaigns. Like Fabius, he aimed by procrastination and delay to win back the conquests of the British Hannibal. Accordingly, his peremptory instructions to his brother were, by no consideration to be drawn into a general action [o]. The English and French armies therefore faced each other from day to day, without proceeding any further than to mutual ostentation and menace.

Fable of the monkish historian.

An idle and ridiculous story is here introduced by the monkish historian, which is entitled to be noticed, as affording a clue to explain many subsequent parts of the history. He states that, while the two armies thus spent their time in inaction, Thomas Beauchamp earl of Warwick, with a small number of followers, suddenly came over from England, and expressed great indignation at the dastardly conduct of his countrymen. He said, that his companions should not have time to digest the first bread they ate in France, before they gained some signal

[o] Froissart, ubi supra.

trophy from the opposite party. The valiant earl however was disappointed. The French army no sooner heard of the arrival of this wonder-working knight, than they struck their tents with dismay, and fled with the utmost precipitation; so that, when the new comer went out after dinner for the accomplishment of his promise, he found nothing on every side but solitude and silence[p].

Seldom has the history of any eminent character been more atrociously misrepresented than that of John of Gaunt; and accordingly we find those who have pretended to record it, endeavouring to fasten disgrace upon it in the first page, as it were, of the series. We shall have abundant occasion in the sequel to detect their falshoods, and to expose the motives in which they originated.

Campaign in the south.

The Black Prince achieved nothing memorable in this campaign. The principal exertions on the side of the French were directed against Aquitaine; but such was the vigilance of the prince, and his illustrious coadjutor, lord Chandos, that they gained no substantial success, and, notwithstanding the advantage in point of time which they derived from their perfidy, the posture of the English affairs in the south was not less favourable at the close of the campaign, than it had been before the commencement of the war.

Death of queen Philippa.

If the year 1369 was marked with no trophies of great military success against us, it was not however undistinguished by domestic and private calamities. Queen Philippa, whose merits have been already described, expired on the

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[p] Walsingham, ad ann.

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1369. of the duchess of Lancaster. of lord Chandos.

fifteenth of August[q]; and Blanche, the consort of John of Gaunt, toward the close of the year[r]. The celebrated Chandos, the most illustrious of all the military subjects of Edward III, fell obscurely in an accidental rencounter with a small party of French, before the commencement of the ensuing campaign[s].

[q] Walsingham, ad ann.

[r] Walsingham, Ypodigma Neustriæ, ad ann.

[s] Froissart, Chap. cclxxvii.

CHAP. XXIX.

CHAUCER'S POEM ENTITLED THE BOOK OF THE DUCHESS.—HIS MARRIAGE.

ON occasion of the death of the duchess Blanche, Chaucer produced an epicedium, or funeral poem, entitled the Book of the Duchess. The plan of this poem is chiefly historical, and many passages of it have already been inserted in our narrative of the courtship of John of Gaunt with the heiress of Lancaster. It is however given in the form of a vision; and is beautifully prefaced with a recital of the pathetic tale of Ceyx and Alcyone, from the eleventh book of Ovid's Metamorphoses, which Chaucer feigns himself to have read immediately before he fell asleep. A parallel is thus silently produced between the untimely fate of Ceyx who was shipwrecked, and of Blanche, who died in the flower of her life, being under thirty years of age; as well as between the exemplary conjugal affection and sorrow of Alcyone, and the anguish excited in the breast of John of Gaunt for the loss of his duchess.

CHAP. XXIX. 1369. Plan of the poem. Ceyx and Alcyone.

Having perused this tale of the Roman poet, Chaucer

Vision of Chaucer.

CHAP. XXIX.

1369.

falls asleep; but, though sleeping, recollects the preceding circumstances, and considers himself as in bed. He dreams that he is roused from his slumbers by the blowing of a horn, the trampling of horses, and the confused voices of men, preparing for a great hunt. Chaucer rises to join in the chace, and finds that it is the hunting of the emperor Octonyen, or Octavien, the hero of one of the romances of chivalry[a]. The hunt lasts a long time: it being over, Chaucer wanders from the rest of the company; and, following a whelp, who comes up to him unexpectedly, and fawns upon him with the familiarity of an old acquaintance, he is led, through a beautiful valley, enamelled with flowers, adorned with trees, and peopled with all kinds of gay and sportive animals, to a large oak, at the foot of which is seated a knight, of noble appearance, clothed in black, and seemingly immersed in disconsolate and melancholy contemplations. This knight is John of Gaunt. In a little while, though Chaucer represents himself as wholly a stranger to the knight, they enter into conversation. That they have no previous acquaintance, is apparently feigned, that the illustrious mourner may with the greater probability and propriety enter into the history of his sorrows.

Affliction of John of Gaunt.

Chaucer dwells emphatically and elaborately upon the depth of his friend's sufferings and anguish. While as yet he had only remarked him unobserved, Chaucer exclaims,

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[a] Percy on Ancient Metrical Romances, No. 19, apud Reliques, Vol. III.

It was grete wonder that nature
Might suffre any créature
To have soche sorow', and he not ded.

ver. 467.

And Gaunt, venting his anguish in soliloquy, is made to say,

Alas, o dethe! what eyleth the,
That thou [b] n'oldest have taken me,
Whan that thou toke my lady swete?

ver. 481.

When he had uttered his complaint, his spirits seemed suddenly to fail him, and his blood retreated to his heart;

and that made al
His hewé chaunge, and [c] wexen grene
And pale.

ver. 496.

Chaucer accosts, and expresses a wish to console, him; for which the knight courteously thanks the poet, but adds,

No man ne may my sorowe glade,
That mak'th my hewe to fal and fade,
And hath myn understanding [d] lorne,
That me is wo, that I was borne.

. . . .

Me's wo, that I live hourés twelve!
And who so wol assaye him selve,
Whether his hert can have pité
Of any sorowe', let him se me;

---

[b] wouldest not. [c] wax. [d] lost, destroyed.

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I wretche, that dethe hath made al naked
Of al the blisse that [e] er was maked;
I wretche, the werstê of al wightes,
That hate my dayês, and my nightes;
My lyfe, my [f] lustês, be my [g] lothe:

. . . .

And this is paine withouten [h] rede,
Alway dyinge, and be not dede;
That Sisyphus that lyeth in hel
Ne may not of more sorowe tel.

ver. 563.

After many exclamations of this disconsolate nature, the hero at length grows more composed, and, to gratify the curiosity of the poet, enters into the history of his loves. He describes the person and accomplishments of Blanche, the coyness and modesty with which she received his courtship, her slow and timorous consent, and the happy nuptials with which his wishes were ultimately crowned. He expatiates with enthusiasm upon the felicity of his marriage state. Many of these passages have been already quoted. The poem then draws to a conclusion.

Sir, [i] quod I, and where is she now?
Now, [i] quod he, and [k] ystinte anone,
Therwith he woxe as dedde as stone,
And saied, Alas, that I was bore!
That was the losse, that here before

---

[e] ever. [f] wishes. [g] aversion. [h] uncertainty, doubt.
[i] quoth, saith. [k] stinted, ceased.

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1369.

I tolde the that I hadde lorne.
Bethinke the how I saied beforne,
"Thou [l] woste full litel what thou menest,
For I have loste more then thou wenest."
God wot, alas! right that was She!
Alas, sir, how? what maie that be?—
She is dedde!—Naie!—Yes, by my trouthe.—
Is that your losse? By God, 'tis [m] routhe!

ver. 1298.

At this moment the party of hunters returns; and "this kyng," as Chaucer now styles him, mounting his horse, rides homeward,

Unto a place was there beside,
Whiche that was from us but a [n] lite,
A long castell, with wallés white,
On a riche hill.——

ver. 1316.

Defects of the poem.

There are several passages in this poem upon the death of the duchess, which mark in no common degree the crudeness of taste of the times in which Chaucer wrote. It is scarcely worth while again, as we did in examining the Troilus and Creseide, to quote single lines which are trite, vulgar and impotent; such as where Chaucer makes his hero say, exclaiming upon fortune,

for she is nothing stable,
Nowe by the fyre, nowe at the table.

ver. 645.

[l] knewest. [m] pity. [n] little.

CHAP. XXIX. 1369. The present poem has much more considerable deformities. Nothing can be in a poorer or more contemptible taste, than where the author, after having worked up the imagination of his readers with a picture of the inconsolable distress of the knight, goes on to make him describe his mischance under the allegory of having played at chess with fortune, and having lost the game. It may however be a still more intolerable absurdity, that his hero proceeds to excuse the conqueror, alleging,

> And eke she is the [o] lasse to blame,
> My selfe I wolde have do the same,
> Before God, had I ben as she.
> . . . .
> For al so wise God give me reste,
> I dare wel swere she toke the beste.
>
> ver. 675.

In answer to all this, Chaucer frigidly undertakes to console him by the examples of Medea, Phyllis and Dido, from Ovid's Epistles. These ladies, he observes, destroyed themselves, and are justly censured for their desperation. They indeed were driven upon their fate by the perfidious inconstancy of the men they adored:

> But there is no man alive here
> Wolde for [p] ther ferés make this wo.
>
> ver. 740.

---

[o] less. [p] his companion, his partner.

It is in a similar style of insufferable trifling that, further on in the poem, where John of Gaunt is introduced speaking of the verses he wrote in praise of his mistress, Chaucer makes him digress into an impertinent discussion whether Pythagoras, or Jubal the son of Lamech, were the first discoverer of the art of music: and this in a discourse, delivered on an occasion of the utmost distress, interrupted with groans, and accompanied with all the tokens of the deepest affliction.

Such are some of the faults of Chaucer's epicedium. We have already had occasion to quote from it many passages of exquisite beauty, and shall presently introduce another, which cannot fail to afford uncommon pleasure to every reader of taste.

Illustration which this poem affords to the history of Chaucer.

But perhaps the principal value of the Book of the Duchess, is to be found in the light which it is calculated to afford to the history of its author. Some uncertainty has been endeavoured to be thrown by Mr. Tyrwhit upon the question, whether the Parliament of Birds and the Dream of Chaucer are to be interpreted as alluding to the courtship and marriage of his illustrious patron. But no reasonable doubt can be formed that the Book of the Duchess relates to the untimely death of the heiress of Lancaster. Lydgate informs us that Chaucer wrote

Certainly written on occasion of the death of the duchess of Lancaster.

> the dethe of Blaunché the duchesse [q].

Chaucer, in the enumeration of his works in the Legend of Good Women [r], uses precisely the same words as Lydgate. And, in the body of this epicedium, as if on pur-

[q] Fall of Princes, Prologue, stanza 44. [r] verse 418.

CHAP. XXIX. 1369.

pose to defeat the groundless scepticism of those critics who appear to doubt only for the pleasure of taking from us all the materials of historical knowledge, he has introduced an unequivocal allusion to the name of his heroine.

> And FAIRÉ WHITÉ was she [a] hete,
> That was my ladies namé right;
> And she was therto faire and bright,
> She ne had not her namé wronge.
>
> ver. 948.

Connection of this piece with the Parliament of Birds, and with the poem entitled Chaucer's Dream.

Now it fortunately happens that these three poems constitute a complete series; and, the application of one of them being established, that of the rest follows to the entire satisfaction of every reasonable mind, from the striking coincidence of two independent details; the first relative to the courtship of John of Gaunt, and the second belonging to the private history of the poet.

proved from the history of the courtship of John of Gaunt.

In the Parliament of Birds the female eagle is made to defer her decision upon the pretensions of her three admirers for a year:

> Almighty quene, unto this yere be done,
> I ask respite, for to avisen me:
>
> ver. 647.

on which Nature addresses herself to the lovers,

> [b] Bethe of gode herte, and serveth allé thre;
> A yere is not so longe for to endure;

[a] hight, called. [b] Be.

And eche of you [a] paine him in his degre
For to do wel.——

ver. 660.

Precisely the same circumstance occurs in the direct and acknowledged history of the courtship of John of Gaunt and the heiress of Lancaster, which is given in the Book of the Duchess. Gaunt is himself the relater.

And whan I had my tale [x] ydo,
God wote sh' acompted not a [y] stre
Of al my tale, so thoughten me:
To tel shortly, right as it is,
Trewly her answere it was this,—
I can not now wel countrefete
Her wordés, but this was the [z] grete
Of her answere:—she saiéd, Nay,
Al utterly.——

ver. 1236.

So it befell, an other yere
I thought [a] onés, I woulden fonde
To [b] doe her knowe and understonde
My wo; and she well understode
That I ne [c] wilned thyng but gode
And worship, and to kepe her name
Over all thynges, and drede her shame.

. . . .

So when my ladie knewe all this,

[a] exert. [x] done, finished. [y] straw. [z] great, sum.
[a] once. [b] cause. [c] willed not.

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My ladie [d] yave me all whollie
The noble [e] yefte of her mercie.

ver. 1258.

from the particulars related in them of the history of Chaucer.

The coincidence of the three poems, so far as relates to the personal history of the author, is still more striking. In the Parliament of Birds Chaucer informs us, as he had already repeatedly done in the Troilus and Creseide, that he was yet a stranger to the passion of love.

For all be that I knowe not love indede,
Ne wot how that he quiteth folke her hire,
Yet happeth me ful ofte in bokés rede
Of his miracles.

ver. 8.

In the poem entitled Chaucer's Dream (which I suppose to have been written twelve months later, when John of Gaunt had completed his year of probation, and was now united to his duchess), the poet is in love in all the forms. His nights are sleepless, and he wets his pillow with his tears: and, in the conclusion of the poem, we find him dreaming that his lady is prevailed upon by the importunity of the knight and princess, and consents to his suit. He awakes however, and regrets that it is but a delusion.

Lo, here my blisse! lo, here my paine!
Which to my ladie I complaine,
And grace and mercy her requere,
. . . .
That of my drémé the substaunce
Might turnen once to cognisaunce.

ver. 2183.

[d] gave. [e] gift.

In the Book of the Duchess Chaucer is still a lover, and his love is still unrequited. This appears from the uncommonly beautiful verses which constitute the exordium of the poem. CHAP XXIX. 1369.

I have grete wonder by this light
Howe that I lyve, for daye ne night
I maye not slepen [f] welny nought,
I have so many an ydle thought,
Purely for the defaute of slepe,
That by my trouth I take no [g] kepe
Of nothing, howe it com'th or gothe,
[h] Ne me n'ys nothing lefe nor lothe;
Al is [i] iliché gode to me,
Joye or sorowe, where so it be,
For I have felinge in nothing,
But as it were a [k] mased thing,
Al day in pointe to fall adoun,
For sorowful imaginacioun
Is alway wholy in my minde.

And well ye wote that againste [l] kinde
It were to liven in this wise;
For nature ne wolde not suffise
Unto none erthy créature
Not longé tymé to endure
Withouten slepe, and be in sorowe;
And I ne may ne night ne morowe
Slepen.——
Defaute of slepe and hevinesse

[f] well nigh. [g] notice, observation. [h] Nor am I either glad or sorrowful.
[i] alike. [k] bewildered. [l] nature.

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1369.

Hath slaine my spirite of quicknesse,
That I have lost al lustihed,
Soche fantasies ben in my hed.

Long courtship of Chaucer.

He then goes on to assign a precise date to his malady.

I holde it be a sikénesse
That I have suffred this eyght yere;
And yet my [m]bote is ner the nere;
For there is phisicien but one
That may me hele.

ver. 36.

The duchess Blanche indeed lived full ten years the wife of John of Gaunt; and so long, comparing the passages above quoted from the Dream with the language of the Book of the Duchess, Chaucer appears to have been the unsuccessful lover of the lady to whom he professes himself attached. How he came to call this period eight years, is more than I can pretend to explain; but Chaucer appears to have been a negligent chronologist; another example of which we have in this poem, where he describes John of Gaunt as twenty-four years old[n], at a time when we well know that he was within three months of completing the thirtieth year of his age. The circumstance however, whether of a ten or an eight years courtship, is so singular an occurrence, as may well enable us to get over this slight difference, and may forcibly impress upon our minds the

[m] advantage, remedy.

[n] See Vol. I, Chap. XX, p. 423.

internal and historical connection between the two poems, of Chaucer's Dream and the Book of the Duchess. CHAP. XXIX.

From the tenour of the poem entitled the Book of the Duchess I think we may conclude with certainty that Chaucer was unmarried when he wrote it, and with probability that he finally married the lady to whom he so perseveringly paid his addresses. The wife of Chaucer was a woman of no mean birth, and her connections were of the highest class. Her sister was attached to the person of the duchess Blanche, and afterward became the governess to her daughters. If then we could conceive so ill of Chaucer's temper and disposition (in defiance of the striking evidence afforded us by his writings) as to believe that he would insult a virtuous and respectable woman, living under his roof, and confided by the laws of all civilised society to his guardianship and protection, by addressing, through the medium of publication, such love-verses as have been above recited, to another; we cannot however persuade ourselves that any but a madman would so directly and grossly affront the great personages who were continually bestowing upon him the marks of their favour. 1369. Chaucer not yet married.

Another independent circumstance comes strikingly in corroboration of this hypothesis of the late period of Chaucer's marriage. The queen died only two or three months before the duchess Blanche; and on the twentieth of January 1370 the king granted, by letters patent, pensions to her *domicellæ*, or maids of honour, in three classes; to four a pension of ten marks *per annum* respectively, to three a pension of one hundred shillings, and to two a pension of

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five marks [o]. In the second class is the name of Philippa Pycard, who was unquestionably the wife of Chaucer. From official records it appears that the Christian name of Chaucer's wife was Philippa, that she had been *domicella* to the queen of Edward III, and that after the queen's death she continued to receive a pension on that account [p]: and the circumstance of her father and elder sister bearing the surname of Rouet can scarcely be considered as an objection; as it was common, even down to the latest period of the French monarchy, for persons of distinction to bear two surnames, one of filiation and another the name of their principal estate, in consequence of which brothers or sisters of the same family often exhibited in their ordinary signatures no token of relationship. From the evidence here produced, it is probable that the name of Chaucer's father-in-law, written at length, was *Le Chevalier Payne Pycard de Rouet*. We find therefore, from the undoubted testimony of the style of the grant to Chaucer's wife, that he was not married at this time.

Reasons of the lady for deferring his suit.

The circumstances here recited may further show us what were the motives which so long delayed the accomplishment of Chaucer's wishes. The lady who was honoured with his addresses may be presumed not to have been entirely indifferent to his person, his character, or accomplishments. But she could not resolve to quit the service of her royal mistress. This seems to be highly honourable to the queen. Chaucer however no doubt still

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[o] Appendix, No. [p] Ditto, No.

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promised himself, that he should be able to induce her to surmount this scruple of delicacy; especially as his addresses are said[q] (and he has insinuated as much in the poem of the Dream) to have been countenanced by the duke and duchess of Lancaster, and perhaps by the queen herself. The lady however, though mild (it may be, a little encouraging) in her refusals, still contrived to elude the conclusion of his suit. At length, the main topic of her objections having been removed by the lamented death of the queen, we may naturally infer that their nuptials were celebrated as soon as the general laws of decorum and the ideas of female delicacy would allow: and we shall see reason hereafter to believe, that Chaucer's marriage could not have taken place later than the year 1370.

1370. His marriage.

Coincidence of circumstances in the lives of Chaucer and Spenser.

The circumstance of so long a courtship may be received as an undoubted evidence of a steady, enthusiastic and undebauched temper of mind. Spenser has left us one hundred sonnets addressed to the lady whom he afterward married, descriptive of all the fluctuations of a protracted courtship. There is also another singular coincidence in this point: Spenser and Chaucer seem both to have married about the same period of life; the age of forty-two. They were however very different in the stamp of their minds. Though Spenser equal in powers of description any poet that ever existed, though his genius be resplendent and his language and his thoughts exquisitely beautiful, yet there is a sickliness and effeminacy in the character of his poetry, which makes us rather tender

[q] Speght, Argument to Chaucer's Dream.

CHAP. XXIX. 1370.

him as a sort of aerial creature, than honour him as a man. Chaucer's poetry is cast in a very different mould. In Spenser's particular excellences Chaucer is by no means his equal. But the verses of our elder poet have no want of vigour and manliness; and in almost every one of his productions we recognise the elasticity of his spirit, and the healthful temper of his soul. If therefore he was a ten years suitor, we may be well assured that this circumstance was in him no indication of a whining and feeble temper, defective in discrimination, or nerveless and impotent to resolve.

Consideration in which Chaucer was now held, illustrated.

The marriage of Chaucer may be regarded as one of the first demonstrative evidences occurring in his history, of the important light in which he was viewed by his contemporaries. We might reasonably indeed presume this, from the known deference and honour with which poets of merit and genius were regarded in this early period of modern Europe. His pension however, granted in the year 1367, was not considerable; and may be conceived as of nearly the same value as the pensions granted to poets in more recent examples, by princes who certainly had no desire to make them their associates and their equals, and in times which could engender the sentiment that it would be an enormous breach of decorum to inter a man distinguished only by his merit as a player [Garrick], among princes and statesmen, but that the honour has nothing in it to astonish us when we find that his tomb is only placed by the side of those of Shakespear and Milton [r].

[r] This sentiment is to be found in a volume entitled *Lettres sur l'Angleterre, par M. Fiévée*, 8vo, 1802.

CHAP. XXIX. 1370.

The marriage of Chaucer fully ascertains the rank in which he was placed. His wife was the daughter of a knight, and a man filling what was in those days regarded as a very distinguished office. Her own situation about the queen was one which we now find reserved for ladies of honourable birth. Her sister was placed in a similar office about the person of the duchess Blanche; and we may conclude, from the sequel of her history, as well as from the superintendence which was committed to her over the female offspring of this distinguished personage, that she was foremost in the possession of the confidence of the duchess. We have seen, in examining the poem entitled Chaucer's Dream, in what terms he speaks of the attention and deference yielded to his wife by the duke and duchess of Lancaster. It was by this marriage, as will hereafter appear, that our poet became the progenitor of the earl of Lincoln, declared by Richard III. presumptive heir to the crown of England; while the sister of Chaucer's wife was the ancestress of those who have now for more than three centuries been in actual possession of it.

CHAP. XXX.

LAST CAMPAIGN OF THE BLACK PRINCE.—CONDUCT OF THE DUKE OF LANCASTER.—CHAUCER SENT UPON A SPECIAL MISSION.

CHAP. XXX.

1370. Aquitaine escheated by the chamber of the peers of France.

THE transactions of the campaign of 1370 began with a memorable proceeding, which, while it ought to have revolted the hearts of mankind against Charles V, tended, by a singular inconsistency characteristic of the human mind, essentially to serve his cause. His first open step in the prosecution of the war was, as we have seen, to summon the Black Prince to answer before him, as his lawful superior, the complaints and allegations of the malcontent lords of Aquitaine. This summons was received, as he expected, with indignation and contempt. A citation of this sort seemed calculated to lead to a solemn and open trial, or rather to the mockery of a trial. Charles however was not of a temper to wait the dilatory steps of a legal process. He saw his advantage for taking possession of the English provinces in the north of France in their unprovided condition; and, with that contempt of justice which marked all his proceedings, immediately seized it. He at the same time marched a considerable army against the frontiers of Aquitaine. But these military measures

1370.

did not suspend the prosecution of the other part of his plan. He knew how to unite the cold and tedious formalities of justice with all the violence and rapacity of plunder. He brought the cause to a public hearing before the chamber of peers in Paris, and in the beginning of the year 1370 caused a sentence to be pronounced, declaring the Black Prince to have forfeited his rights in the duchy of Aquitaine, and confiscating all the English possessions in France to the use of the crown [a].

A sentence of this sort, had all the inhabitants of Aquitaine been well affected and loyal, would have united them as one man in resentment of so atrocious an insult. But Charles, in the dark and insidious conceptions of his crafty spirit, had well known how to time his affront. The hearth-money had first given the signal of discontent in Aquitaine. Many of the feudatory lords of that province, before the commencement of hostilities, had retired to the court of France. Charles was subtle and indefatigable in his endeavours to corrupt the rest. Repeated instances of treachery and rebellion had driven the Black Prince and his ministers to some measures of legal severity and retributory justice [b]. This, in the spirit of disaffection which had been artfully propagated against him, did but increase the evil. It was at that moment that his adversary issued his decree of forfeiture against him, and the consequences which

[a] Duchesne, Histoire d'Angleterre ad ann. Henault Abrégé Chronologique, ad ann.

[b] Froissart, Vol. II, Chap. i. The historian refers these acts of severity to the year 1375; but what is related by him, Vol. I, Chap. cclxxviii, makes this the more probable date. See Barnes, Book IV, Chap. vii, §. 2.

CHAP. XXX. 1370.

resulted were in some degree what that adversary had foreseen and desired. The malcontents, who wanted but a pretext to colour their revolt, alleged that they could no longer in duty adhere to the English standard, but were obliged to submit to the sovereign lord of all France, who had been compelled by imperious necessity to sign an act of alienation, which he had no power to execute.

invaded by two French armies.

The sentence of confiscation being thus issued, Charles V. dispatched two considerable armies under his brothers, the dukes of Anjou and Berry, to enter Aquitaine in opposite directions [c]. The Black Prince however appears to have taken his measures so well, that they were not able to make any considerable impression upon his garrisons. The principal exploit of the French on this side was the capture of Limoges; and even this success they owed to the treachery of the bishop of that city, whom the Black Prince had particularly honoured with his confidence [d]. The prince was therefore highly exasperated at this occurrence; and, postponing every other consideration, resolved, whatever it cost him, to reduce this unfaithful city to his obedience. His health however was now so infirm that, in undertaking this expedition, he was obliged to be carried in a litter. Beside other persons of distinction who served under him, were his brothers, the duke of Lancaster, and Edmund of Langley now earl of Cambridge [d]. The city made a desperate resistance; but the walls were at length thrown down by mines, and the place entered by storm. The prince, rendered irritable by

Revolt of Limoges.

Black Prince marches against it.

Limoges taken by storm.

[c] Froissart, Vol. I, Chap. cclxxxii.

[d] Ditto, Chap. cclxxxvi, cclxxxvii.

sickness, chagrined by the unprosperous state of his affairs, and deeply wounded by the infidelity of the treacherous bishop, stained the honour of his name by issuing orders for a general massacre. The soldiers who served under him appear to have too faithfully obeyed the injunctions of their honoured master; and for some time the town exhibited a scene of the most horrible barbarity and anguish. At this distressful moment, the commandant of the garrison, accompanied by two of his friends, collected a chosen troop of eighty men, resolved to sell their lives as dearly as they could. They were presently encountered by the duke of Lancaster and a band of soldiers whom he had brought over from England for the service of this campaign. The Frenchmen were cut off almost to a man. The duke of Lancaster, with the earls of Cambridge and Pembroke, the son and the son-in-law of Edward III, according to the mode of the times selected the commandant and his two friends, and fought them hand to hand. The contest was obstinate and brave. At this crisis the Black Prince, who had entered the breach mounted upon his chariot, came toward the spot where they fought. Struck with the spectacle of so much bravery, he granted to the prowess of these knights, what we are told helpless children, and women in the agonies of death, had in vain sought to obtain from him. He ordered that these officers should be admitted to surrender, and at the same time issued directions for an amnesty to be proclaimed through the city[*].

Desperate conflict.

Gallant behaviour of the duke of Lancaster.

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[*] Froissart, Chap. cclxxxix. Barnes, Book IV, Chap. vii, §. 20.

CHAP. XXX.

1370. His generous artifice for the preservation of the bishop.

Another memorable circumstance marked the capture of Limoges. We know little of the personal character of the bishop; but we may reasonably conclude that he was a man of extraordinary endowments, since he had insinuated himself so deeply into the confidence of his sovereign. John of Gaunt was also his friend. Through the whole of his life this prince appears to have felt a powerful propensity to be the friend of admirable and extraordinary men. The bishop had been guilty of an offence which according to all the rules of policy exposed him to the punishment of death. But John of Gaunt had the weakness or the folly, if that be its name, of being in a high degree averse to see great powers of mind extinguished, and the wonders of the human race fall under the inexorable arm of the law. He pardoned the bishop of Limoges, as Aurelian might have pardoned Longinus.

To enable him to effect this, it was however necessary to employ a stratagem. He begged of his brother as a boon that the bishop might be his prisoner. The prince, unsuspicious of his purpose, though full of resentment against the prelate, easily granted the duke his request. He considered the bishop, however disposed of at present, as reserved for capital punishment. Having gained this point, John of Gaunt next dispatched an emissary to the pope at Avignon, conjuring him, as he valued the life of one of the most illustrious ornaments of the church, to write a letter interceding for his pardon. The letter arrived; the duke of Lancaster showed it to his brother; and the prince murmuring and unwillingly complied, saying, the duke had now the power to dispose of him, but deeply

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regretting that he had deferred his vengeance so long[f]. Thus the innocent inhabitants suffered for the crime of their superior, while the real perpetrator of the guilt escaped, and was dismissed unhurt. For this inequality however John of Gaunt is responsible. He saw it was in vain to endeavour to appease the declining hero in the first exacerbations of his rage: but, because he could not do all the good he might desire, he did not therefore refuse to do the good in his power.

English invade France to the north.

A powerful diversion was made by Edward III. in this campaign, for the preservation of Aquitaine. He sent sir Robert Knolles, a commander of high reputation, with an army according to the English historians of twelve[g], and according to the French of thirty[h], thousand men, to penetrate by way of Calais into the heart of France. Sir Robert Knolles executed his commission with fidelity, and effected the objects for which he was employed.

Chivalrous exploits.

Two gallant exploits of individuals in his army are recorded, and deserve to be mentioned here as illustrating the military spirit of the times. Passing by Noyon, the English general in vain endeavoured to provoke the French garrison, which was numerous and well appointed, to come out and fight him. Seeing this, a Scottish knight in the army rode up to the barriers, and, dismounting, leaped over, saying, "Gentlemen, I have been desirous to visit you; and, seeing you will not come out to me, I am come in to you, to prove my knighthood against you: win me if you

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[f] Froissart, ubi supra. Barnes, ditto.

[g] Hollinshed, ad ann.

[h] Mezeray, apud Barnes, §. 16.

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can." He then encountered twelve knights, hand to hand, for a whole hour, their generosity preventing him from being oppressed by numbers; and afterward sprung back over the barrier, remounted his steed, and retired unhurt[i]. At Paris the enemy stood equally upon the defensive. Here a knight in the English army determined to show his prowess, by striking with his spear against the gate of the city. He accordingly rode singly through the suburbs for that purpose, and accomplished his design; while the Frenchmen from the walls exclaimed, "Go thy way in God's name; sufficiently hast thou proved thy knighthood." On his return however, he was assaulted unawares by a butcher, and felled to the ground, and afterward murdered by the populace[k].

Misunderstanding among the English commanders.

The campaign of this year was closed by a misfortune of some magnitude. Sir Robert Knolles, having accomplished the object of his mission, retired to the west of France, and directed the different detachments of his army to fix their winter-quarters in Britanny, the duke of which country was in alliance with Edward III. Some of the young nobility in his army murmured against these orders. Sir Robert Knolles was of mean extraction; his first situation in the army had been that of a private soldier[l]; and, notwithstanding his high military qualities, these young knights had with great reluctance submitted to his command. They now alleged that the period of their service was expired, and that they were no longer bound

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[i] Froissart, Chap. cclxxxiv. [k] Ditto, Chap. cclxxxviii.

[l] Weever, Funeral Monuments: Diocese of London; White Friars.

to obedience. They derided the weakness of the French, who had suffered them to march through the heart of the kingdom without offering to molest them, and declared their intention to take up their quarters in the enemy's territories [m]. CHAP. XXX. 1370.

Du Guesclin marches against them.

During these dissensions, it happened that Du Guesclin, the general with whom the Black Prince had fought at Najara, and who was now fast rising into eminence, had been recalled by a message of Charles V. from the Castilian service, and had lately arrived in France. He was anxious to do something on his native soil, to justify the expectations that were formed of him. In this situation, he heard of the state of sir Robert Knolles's army, and immediately conceived that the occasion which he sought was offered to him. He set out on his march from Paris with such forces as he could collect. The English general heard of his approach, and began to flatter himself that he should obtain the offer of a battle, which during his whole march he had earnestly sought. He summoned with all haste his different corps from their winter-quarters to meet him. They were however less prompt and exact in their obedience than the circumstances required; and the quarters which they had wilfully chosen placed them too nearly within reach of the enemy. Indefatigable exertion and celerity of motion were the characteristics of Du Guesclin's excellence, and were of the highest service to him on this occasion. He came up with a detachment of eight thousand English, who were on their march to join their

His success.

[m] Walsingham, ad ann.

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general, and was so successful as to kill or take prisoners the whole of this body [n]. Having done this, he felt that he had effected all that he expected or desired. He withdrew; and left the general and officers of the English army to lament the fatal effects of jealousy and disobedience.

Chaucer sent upon a special mission.

In the course of this year we find Chaucer employed upon some commission to the continent, the object of which is not explained to us [o]. All that appears on the record is that, being about to pass beyond sea for the service of the king, he had letters of protection delivered to him for that purpose. These letters bear date on the twentieth of June. It is not easy to decide whether his marriage took place previously to this journey, or after his return. The age of Thomas Chaucer however, his son, who was speaker of the house of commons in the second year of Henry IV, may well incline us to assign the earliest admissible date to his father's marriage.

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[n] Froissart, Chap. ccxci.

[o] Appendix, No. IV.

CHAP. XXXI.

DUKE OF LANCASTER LIEUTENANT OF AQUITAINE.—MARRIES THE HEIRESS OF CASTILLE.—ASSERTS HIS TITLE TO THAT CROWN.

CHAP. XXXI. 1371. Retirement of the Black Prince.

IN the beginning of the year 1371, the Black Prince, finding his health become daily more infirm, took his final leave of the government of Aquitaine, and sailed, with his consort, and his only surviving child, Richard, for England[a]. The period of his departure was marked with the melancholy circumstance of the death of his eldest son, seven years of age, whose funeral rites he left to the direction of his brother, the duke of Lancaster. He at the same time committed to the duke the reins of government in Aquitaine under the character of his lieutenant, conjuring the powerful barons and lords of the country to prove their attachment to himself by a devoted adherence to his honoured representative[b].

Affair of Montpaon.

Shortly after, there occurred an affair in some respects similar to that of the sack of Limoges. The fidelity of almost all the native lords of the English provinces in France was shaken by the sinister and corrupt practices of Charles V. Among them, the lord of Montpaon, a strong

[a] Walsingham, A. D. 1370.

[b] Froissart, Chap. cccciii.

CHAP. XXXI. 1371. castle in the province of Rovergue, had entered deeply into these cabals. The Black Prince having taken his leave of the province of Aquitaine, he thought this a fit opportunity to reconcile himself to the court of France. He accordingly gave notice of his intention to a party of men at arms in the service of Charles V, and admitted them into his castle. The duke of Lancaster saw the necessity of a prompt interference to prevent the spirit of revolt from becoming general. He set out immediately with a select body of men, the flower of the English party in Aquitaine, and commenced a regular siege of Montpaon. The French who had taken possession, gallantly held out the garrison against him for some weeks. At length a practicable breach was effected in the walls, and every thing prepared for an assault. In this emergency the enemy applied for leave to surrender; and after certain parleys, and the urging of perhaps artificial demurs on the part of the duke of Lancaster, every individual in the castle was admitted prisoner of war [o]. The lord of Montpaon had previously made his escape.

Suspension of the war.

The whole of this year passed without any considerable action. It seemed as if both parties had tacitly consented to a suspension of hostilities. The king of France was desirous of gaining time for completing his plots, to which he trusted more than to his arms, for the recovery of Aquitaine. The task of the English was defensive; and, under the first impression of the melancholy state of the Black Prince, and the consequent unsettled posture of affairs, the duke of Lancaster did not think

[o] Froissart, Chap. cccxiv.

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himself strong enough to engage in any decisive measure. The period of repose however was only temporary; and both parties prepared to make the campaign of 1372 decisive of the fate of the contest.

Second marriage of the duke of Lancaster.

During this interval the duke of Lancaster formed a second matrimonial engagement. His first marriage, if we may trust to the evidence of Chaucer, was the engagement of love. His second was probably the dictate of policy or ambition. We have already spoken of the contest between Peter the Cruel and his natural brother for the throne of Castille. Soon after the retreat of the Black Prince from his Spanish expedition, affairs in that country assumed a different aspect; and Du Guesclin, having been admitted to ransom, found means by his prowess and military skill to replace the crown upon the bastard's head. Peter the Cruel was taken prisoner, and the usurper assassinated him with his own hand. Peter left issue two daughters, the eldest of whom had now become by the death of her father the legitimate heir to the Castillian throne.

Death of Peter king of Castille.

These princesses were left, either as hostages or as guests, in the province of Aquitaine, when their father set out, accompanied by his illustrious protector, for the campaign of Najara; and they had continued in this equivocal species of exile from that time. In this moment of leisure and uncontrol, the duke of Lancaster cast his eyes upon these illustrious dames. He was indignant at seeing the last military achievement of his gallant brother overthrown, and an assassin and a bastard in quiet possession of one of the first crowns in Europe; he pitied the desolate and calamitous condition of these princesses; and he was perhaps not insensible in his own breast to the at-

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1371. Character of John of Gaunt.

tractions of a throne. We shall probably find the duke of Lancaster in our further survey of his history, not listening to the suggestions of an irregular ambition, incapable of yielding to an act of dishonour, yet fond of authority, eagerly desirous of reputation and respect, and not averse to that species of magnificence and ostentation which waits upon elevated rank. Impressed with these sentiments, he took with him his brother the earl of Cambridge, and waited upon the Spanish ladies in their retirement; and the result of the visit was the proposal of a double marriage. This measure had the sanction of the court of London; the nuptials were speedily solemnised [d]; and shortly afterward John of Gaunt took the title, and assumed the insignia, of king of Castille and Leon [e]. By this appellation he will frequently be distinguished in the remainder of this history: not that it gave to him real office, revenue or power; but that, if we would enter into men's characters, and comprehend their feelings, we must be careful to assume in fancy their situations, must follow their reasonings, recognise their prejudices, and call the surrounding objects by the names which they were accustomed to employ. John of Gaunt was from this time frequently addressed in the style of royalty; he kept a little court, and added somewhat to the splendour and magnificence in which he had hitherto lived; and these circumstances were by no means without their effect upon the subsequent transactions of his history.

assumes the title of king of Castille.

Impolicy and immorality of this proceeding.

No proceeding can be less judicious, or afford less chance of ultimately redounding to the glory of him who adopts

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[d] Froissart, Chap. ccc.

[e] Sandford, Book IV, Chap. i.

it, than this sort of speculative and dialectical claim to the supreme magistracy of a nation. The duke of Lancaster had a practical illustration of this before him, in the great measure of his father's reign; and it certainly conduces by no means to the credit of his sagacity or of the rectitude of his moral feelings, that so memorable a lesson produced so little impression upon him. Government is a topic of complicated and delicate texture: no consent, as some theorists have idly imagined, gives birth to its institution; yet it depends most intimately upon the temper, the prejudices and the opinions of those for the benefit of whom it ought to be conducted. The man who puts these out of the question, and considers with contempt or disrespect the sentiments of a nation in points in which it is most intimately concerned, makes a glaring exhibition of his weakness in regard to policy; and, though perhaps not of a depraved heart, acts as if he disdained all attention to the interests, the rights and the happiness of mankind. What was the duke of Lancaster to the Spanish nation? The majority of them scarcely knew of his existence; or, if they did, felt as much inclination to be governed by an emissary from the Grand Lama of Tartary, as by him. This generous people, with a prejudice congenial to the human mind, preferred for their sovereign a bastard and a regicide, born among them and descended from the race of their kings, to the most gallant and blameless prince on earth, of whom they had no knowledge, and who could not enter into their peculiarities. In this great crisis of the life of John of Gaunt, he evinced the most essential deficiencies of character. His contemporaries, it is to be feared, did not comment, as it deserved, upon the immorality of his proceeding; but they felt most materially to his disadvantage

CHAP. XXXI. 1371. the imbecility of pretending to a crown which he could have no reasonable hope to acquire, and of regaling his fancy with the gaudy outside of royalty, and the empty name of a king, which, while it conferred no power, must to the mind of every sober and judicious observer convey an idea of ridicule.

Motive from which it sprung. Yet it is not difficult to assign the motive which influenced the duke of Lancaster in this measure. He felt, as his elder brother had done, indignant at the impudent usurpation and sanguinary actions of Henry of Transtamare. He desired by his own interposition to pluck him from the throne; and this project was not the less pleasing to him because he thought the proper conclusion of the exploit was to place himself upon the throne in his stead. John of Gaunt, like all the other children of Edward III. was bred in the purest and most refined notions of chivalry. We may therefore be well convinced that he contemplated with particular reverence the achievements of Rodrigo Dias, commonly called the Cid, and the other Spanish champions, who, in their contentions against the Moors, were the first to raise chivalry to the consummation of its splendour. To rescue this nation of heroes from the rod of an usurper, appeared to his thoughts the greatest of all human exploits; to preside over them the highest of all human glories. Zeal and enthusiasm are never very accurate calculators. He saw this perspective in distant view; and, unhappily for himself, and for his true and substantial fame, was too eager and animated, to allow him to consider its parts and estimate it in detail.

CHAP. XXXII.

POLITICAL ADMINISTRATION OF JOHN OF GAUNT.—ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.—STATUTES OF PROVISORS AND PREMUNIRE.

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FROM the consideration of the king of Castille in his relations with other countries, the course of events now leads us to view him as connected with the civil transactions of his own. Lionel duke of Clarence, the second son of Edward III, died in 1368; and the Black Prince brought with him, from his Spanish campaign in 1367, an impaired and broken constitution, which no subsequent care or skill had the power to restore. These events, together with the declining age of the king, made way for that high degree of political influence and power to which John of Gaunt rose in the concluding period of his father's reign. The ascendancy he now acquired had, as we have already observed, been in some measure prepared several years before, when, the duke of Clarence being settled in Ireland, and the Black Prince in Aquitaine, John of Gaunt was the only son of Edward III. remaining in England, whose years were sufficiently mature, or who possessed

CHAP. XXXII. enough of energy, to be consulted by his father in the affairs of his government, or to be resorted to as a pillar of state whereupon to repose in a certain degree the cares of empire[a]. Edward III. is particularly distinguished in history by his fondness as a father; and, though blessed with a family of uncommon endowments, there is no one of his sons whom he appears to have loved more affectionately than John of Gaunt. It is now therefore incumbent upon us to endeavour to trace, in such indications as the memoirs and documents of the times will afford, the progressive degrees of political power attained to by this eminent personage. We may sufficiently judge, from Chaucer's situation, his secret mission in 1370 already mentioned[b], his public embassy to Genoa in 1372[c], and the confidential place which his poems upon John of Gaunt's courtship and marriage prove him to have held in the friendship of this prince, that we cannot treat of the political conduct and proceedings of the martial hero, without descanting upon matters in which Chaucer was eminently concerned and deeply involved. This will be made still more evident in the sequel. In the convulsive and turbulent reign of Richard II, Chaucer invariably rose and fell with the interchangeable vicissitudes of authority and disgrace of his master the king of Castille.

The most considerable domestic concern of the English government which was in agitation at the period to which our subject now leads us, was relative to the usurpations

[a] Vol. I, Chap. XXIII, p. 473. [b] Chap. XXX, p. 104. [c] Chap. XXXV.

and incroachments of the court of Rome, upon the royal prerogative and upon the internal polity of England. The dispute about investitures in the eleventh century, in which the emperors of the house of Franconia were humbled at the feet of pope Gregory the Great and his successors, has already been mentioned[d]. The sovereign pontiff was triumphant in this contest; he in consequence very frequently nominated whomever he pleased to the vacant bishoprics and benefices in every country of Europe. The ascendancy of the church however was never so complete, as to preclude the occasional interference of secular sovereigns and lay patrons in promoting their own adherents to ecclesiastical dignities. Both parties seem to have found their advantage in leaving the question in this uncertainty; and neither had the fortitude to urge the affair practically to a general issue, though each was loud and copious in asserting his several pretensions.

Impositions of the Roman pontiff.

When literature and civilisation had so far gained ground as to give a decisive check to the usurpations of the church, the authority of the Roman pontiff in this article became daily more a subject of question and complaint. Under these circumstances it was unfortunate for his cause, that his incroachments bore too much the appearance of pecuniary rapacity and extortion, a topic sufficiently level to the apprehensions of mankind even in ages of the greatest blindness and ignorance. Various were the contrivances of the venerable head of the church, to drain the different provinces of Christendom of their treasures, and with money

[d] Vol. I, Chap. IV, p. 41.

from all quarters to fill the Roman coffers. For this purpose, he exacted, on various pretences, great contributions from the clergy. He introduced a new tax under the name of first-fruits, alleging that he had a right to one year's income upon all vacant bishoprics and ecclesiastical preferments. He summoned all bishops and archbishops to repair to Rome, to obtain from him a solemn installation into their new dignities. He drew all ecclesiastical causes of importance thither, where he kept the parties waiting for a long time, and at an immense expence, for a decision. The sale of indulgences, pardons and dispensations, the occasions for which were continually multiplied, brought a boundless revenue to the court of Rome. In a word, it was a notorious scandal, which every one repeated and none had the boldness to deny, that every thing was venal in that government. Beside these direct sources of revenue, the pope accumulated wealth upon his friends and adherents by reservations and provisions; expedients which were necessary, on account of the extent of his spiritual dominions, to prevent the chapters and ecclesiastical incorporations on the spot from filling the vacant dignities before he should have heard that they were void. By reservations, the pope declared beforehand, that he reserved to himself the nomination to such benefices or sees, whenever they should fall in: and by provisions, he announced certain individuals as the destined successors on the resignation or death of the present incumbents.

Contributions of the clergy. *First-fruits.* *The episcopal pall.* *Appeals.* *Indulgences, pardons and dispensations.* *Reservations and provisions.*

Ecclesiastical history of the reign of Henry III.

All these subjects of complaint were taken up with great spirit in this country, under the long reign of Henry III. The king himself, weak and pusillanimous in his temper, showed little disposition to resist the in-

croachments of the sovereign pontiff; but a new party rose against the court of Rome in the persons of the barons. They particularly exclaimed with much vehemence against the multitude of Italians who were nominated by the pope to livings in England, though ignorant of the manners and customs of the country from which they derived their revenues, and even unacquainted with its language, so that preaching and the cure of souls were wholly neglected. In the true spirit of the times, they did not stop at remonstrance; but entered into associations, and threatened to drive these foreign ecclesiastics from the kingdom [e]. The pope however does not seem to have been deterred by their menaces; as we read, a few years afterward, of various livings and dignities, to the amount of three hundred, conferred by the papal legate resident in this country [f].

Bishop Grosseteste.

The pious and venerable bishop Grossteste, the friend of Roger Bacon, distinguished himself by his opposition to this mercenary and sinister policy of the court of Rome. The pope having sent him a mandate, requiring him to bestow upon one of his holiness's nephews, then a child, a vacant canonry in his see of Lincoln, Grossteste refused to obey, and remonstrated with the pontiff in these terms. "If we except the sins of Lucifer and Antichrist, there neither is nor can be a greater crime, nor any thing more contrary to the doctrine of the gospel, or more odious and abominable in the sight of Jesus Christ, than to ruin and destroy the souls of men, by depriving them of the spi-

[e] Matt. Paris, A. D. 1231. Rymer, Tom. I, 16 Hen. 3, Jun. 7.
[f] Matt. Paris, A. D. 1241.

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ritual aid and ministry of their pastors. It is impossible therefore that the holy apostolical see, which received its authority from the Lord Jesus Christ for edification, and not for destruction, can be guilty of such a crime, or any thing approaching to such a crime, so hateful to God, so hurtful to men. This would be a most manifest corruption and abuse of its authority, would forfeit all its glory, and plunge it into the pains of hell [g]."

Ecclesiastical history of Edward I.

Edward I, the successor of Henry III, was a prince of a very different character, and his measures were such as might be expected from the depth of his policy and the energy of his temper. With him originated the important statute of mortmain, prohibiting the clergy from making further acquisitions of land from the pious bequests or donations of their votaries, under pain of forfeiting the property in such manner acquired [h]. In the twenty-fifth year of his reign he was engaged in a dispute with the clergy of his dominions respecting their obligation to contribute to the necessities of the state; and, receiving from them a refusal of his demand, supported by a papal bull which forbade their compliance, he, instead of applying to the pope for a relaxation of his precept, adopted a shorter and more peremptory method, telling his clergy that, since they refused to contribute to the support of civil government, they were unworthy to reap the benefits of it, and accordingly declaring them out of the protection of the law. He gave directions to the officers in his different courts, to hear those causes only respecting the

Statute of mortmain. 1279.

Dispute of Edward I. with his clergy. 1297.

[g] Matt. Paris, A. D. 1253.

[h] Statutes at Large, 7 Edv. 1, Stat. 2.

clergy, in which they were defendants; to do every man justice against them, and to do them justice against nobody. The consequence of this, pursuant to the ferocious manners of the times, was, that they could not appear abroad, without being attacked by ruffians or persons who had an animosity against them, dismounted from their horses, and stripped of their property, and even apparel; nor were they safe in their own houses. The archbishop of Canterbury, the leader of this opposition, was reduced to fly from his palace, and hide himself obscurely, with a single servant, under the roof of a country-clergyman[i]. Thus did this rigorous and stern politician prosecute the quarrel in which he was engaged. He subjected his adversaries to a species of martyrdom, which had no tendency to feed their arrogance or their vanity, but was on the contrary the most mortifying to spiritual pride that could be imagined. He remained as it were a passive spectator of their persecution; and rendered his subjects the instruments of this ecclesiastical war, without subjecting himself to the invidious appearance of being active in the contest. He inforced his own cause, that of weakening the empire of the hierarchy, in the most effectual manner, by employing the people to insult the order they had regarded as sacred, or accustoming them to see it insulted. One of the last measures of the reign of Edward I, was a statute passed in a parliament held by him at Carlisle, called the statute of provisors; prohibiting the bringing into the kingdom any of the pope's writs of provisions or reservations for the

Statute of provisors. 1307.

[i] Hume, Chap. XIII.

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disposal of benefices, and the exportation of money under the denomination of first-fruits, or of any of the various taxes which, under numerous pretences, the court of Rome imposed upon this vassal island [k].

Edward II.

It was in this state that the question of civil and ecclesiastical authorities was delivered down to Edward III. It does not appear that any strong measures were adopted against the usurpations of the church under the imbecil and temporising reign of Edward II.

State of the church at the accession of Edward III.

On a superficial review of the subject, we might suppose that considerable progress had been made in the thirteenth century toward reducing the insolent and enormous power which had been engrossed by the court of Rome. Something undoubtedly was done; the mind of Europe was materially changed, during that period which, as was observed on a former occasion [l], was illustrated by the united intellect of a few of the greatest men that ever existed. But much less was done than might have been imagined. The genius of the age was ill adapted for the methodical and progressive erection of dams and wears to shut in the imperious flood of ecclesiastical usurpation. The prejudices of mankind had now for several generations been favourable to this abject superstition. What the hierarchy lost under a vigorous secular administration, they recovered under the feeble one which followed. What was wrested from them by the stern and fearless baron in

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[k] This statute is said in the preamble to the statute, 25 Edv. 3, Stat. 6, to have been passed in the twenty-fifth, but the tenour of the history makes it probable that its true date is the thirty-fifth, year of Edward I. See Barnes, Book I, Chap. xxi, §. 10; and the marginal correction to this preamble in Ruffhead.

[l] Vol. I, Chap. II, p. 16.

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the hour of his health and pride, they knew how to regain, by presenting before him his childhood terrors of damnation and purgatory, on the bed of sickness. The statutes which were made to restrain their incroachments, were of little avail. It was the fashion of this period, that statutes not continually urged and consulted, fell into disuse, and even seem to be supposed to have lost their authority. This is the clue, which explains to us the repeated reenactions of Magna Charta and many of our most salutary laws with the same formalities and solemnity as if they were then introduced for the first time.

Statute of provisors revived. 1343.

It is not till the seventeenth year of Edward III. that we find any notice of parliamentary measures against the incroachments of the court of Rome, in the ancient records of this reign. Stratford archbishop of Canterbury is supposed to have been the author of the proceedings then adopted[m]. He had been an active and useful minister of Edward III; but, having two years before been involved in a quarrel with his sovereign, he is believed to have brought forward these measures, partly that he might the more fully reinstate himself in the favour of the king; and partly perhaps, in conformity to his character and duties as primate of England, that he might shut out the enormous influx of foreigners into the benefices of the English church preventing the regular and wholesome instruction of the people, that he might maintain the purity of its ancient constitution as to the election or nomination of its ministers, and that he might prevent its revenues from being thus

[m] Barnes, Book I, Chap. xxii, §. 2.

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injuriously conveyed into foreign countries. By his advice then, parliament was instigated to send for the act of the last year of Edward I. from Carlisle, and to reenact its clauses against provisions and appeals [n]. In the year following, it having been remarked that the injunctions of this statute had not been accompanied by penalties, an amending act was introduced, subjecting those who transgressed it to the pains of outlawry [o]. The purposes of this law were somewhat reinforced by the circumstance, that the reigning pope was a Frenchman, and was conceived to adhere to the king's enemies in the war then depending for the claim of Edward III. to the crown of France. Yet it sufficiently appears, from the frequent agitation of the subject in parliament, that its execution was partial and irregular. The reenaction of the act against the pope's nomination to benefices and the appeals carried to Rome, commonly called the statute of provisors, and of the act of penalties against offenders in these points called the statute of premunire, from which these laws in our statute-book take their date, was in 1351 and 1353 respectively [p].

Statute of premunire. 1344.

These statutes reenacted. 1351, 1353.

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[n] Cotton, 17 E. 3. [o] Ditto, 18 E. 3.

[p] Statutes at Large, 25 Edv. 3, Stat. 6; and 27 Edv. 3, Stat. 1, cap. 1.

CHAP. XXXIII.

KING JOHN'S TRIBUTE ABOLISHED.—RISE OF WICLIFFE.—PARLIAMENTARY REMONSTRANCE AGAINST THE APPOINTMENT OF CHURCHMEN TO THE GREAT OFFICES OF STATE.—WILLIAM OF WYKEHAM.

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1365.

SUCH was the relative condition of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities in England at the commencement of the period we have now to consider. Little further occurs on the subject of the pope's oppressive pretensions, till the year 1365. At that time we find the statutes of provisors and of premunire once again reenacted at the personal requisition of the king [a]. But the year is rendered more remarkable by the letters of pope Urban V. to the king of England, requiring the payment of the arrears of the tribute of one thousand marks *per annum*, imposed upon the realm by king John, and which had failed to be discharged ever since the year 1333 (the very year in which Edward III. came of age); and summoning the king to his court to answer for the default, in case he should hesitate to comply with this demand [b].

King John's tribute demanded.

[a] Cotton, 39 E. 3.

[b] Barnes, Book III, Chap. xii, §. 8.

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It cannot perhaps be exactly ascertained at this distance of time, with what degree of regularity this disgraceful tribute had been conceded. Some historians have questioned whether it had ever been paid after the death of its royal imposer [c]. There are however various records in the collections of Rymer [d], proving that it was discharged, though irregularly and with intermissions and arrears, in one instance of eight and in another of eleven years, down to the year 1330 [e], which may be admitted as an evidence sufficient to establish the veracity of pope Urban's representation.

Unseasonableness of the demand.

It certainly appears to have been ill policy in the pope, to have revived this obsolete claim at the present period. The reign of Edward III. was illustrious; his character was high; and his influence and name were sufficiently great, to enable him to treat with contempt the demand that was now made. He had gained the battles of Cressy and Poitiers, and confirmed himself in all the acquisitions he could ever have thought of as permanent, by the peace of Bretigni. No event had yet happened to tarnish his glory, or disarm his energy. The sovereign pontiff attacked him in all his vigour, instead of waiting for the period which soon after arrived, when he appeared, to the vulgar eye at least, shorn of his beams.

1366. It is refused.

Edward III. felt that the time had now come, to reject for ever the ignominious vassalage which his base-hearted predecessor had fastened upon the realm; and ac-

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[c] Barnes, Book III, Chap. xii, §. 8.

[d] Tom. II, 5 Edv. 1, Dec. 18; 6 Edv. 1, Feb. 23; 16 Edv. 1, Apr. 29; 20 Edv. 1, Mar. 18.

[e] Tom. IV, 4 Edv. 3, Apr. 28.

cordingly, instead of adopting any measures for discharging the pretended arrears, he resolved to submit the whole question to the parliament which met on the thirtieth of March in the following year. This assembly with one consent pronounced, that neither king John, nor any other king, could bring the realm and people into such thraldom without the approbation of parliament, and that what he had done was contrary to his coronation oath; they therefore exhorted the king, if the pope should attempt any thing against him by process or any other way, to oppose such usurpation with all his power and force[f]. It was on this occasion that Edward III. came to a resolution of putting an end to the payment of the annual tax of one penny upon each house for the support of an English college at Rome, commonly called Peter's Pence, which had originated in the time of the heptarchy[g].

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Peter's Pence abolished.

At this period it is that the memorable name of Wicliffe first occurs in the annals of our country. He seized the present occasion to write a treatise against the tribute claimed by Urban V, in answer to an argument published by an English monk in defence of the papal demand[h]. He had before distinguished himself by his writings against the claims and the pretended superior holiness of the mendicant friars[i], following in these productions the steps of William de St. Amour, and Richard archbishop of Armagh, before mentioned[k]. As the same parliament which abolished king John's tribute, made a law, forbidding the mendicants

Wicliffe.

Act against the mendicant friars.

[f] Cotton, 40 E. 3.

[g] Barnes, Book III, chap. xiii. §. 1.

[h] Lewis, Life of Wicliffe, Chap. II.

[i] Lewis, Chap. I.

[k] Chap. XXV.

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to receive any scholar into their orders under the age of eighteen years [l], we may with some degree of probability infer, that Wicliffe did not enter into the national question as a private individual, but more probably that he was encouraged to take up the pen by the king or his ministers.

Genius of this reformer.

Wicliffe was a man of humble birth, but possessed of the most transcendant abilities. This will more fully appear in the sequel of what we shall have occasion to observe respecting him. He was one of those persons who reflect the greatest lustre upon the country which was so fortunate as to have produced them. His mind was scarcely less original than that of Bacon or Shakespear; and he has procured for this island the enviable distinction, of having been the first to break the chains which superstition and an hypocritical policy had imposed upon the powers of investigation, reasoning and the discovery of truth, which characterise the human mind.

The contemporaries of Wicliffe did justice to the superiority of his abilities. The monkish historians, who pour out every kind of virulence and invective against him, yet appear at a loss for words to express their conception of his talents. In philosophy, they tell us, he was reckoned second to none, and in the depths of scholastic reasoning was without a peer. His powers incessantly goaded him to surpass others in the subtlety of his knowledge and the profoundness of his invention, and to strike into the paths of new and original opinions [m].

His early history.

He accordingly rose early to the greatest distinctions

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[l] Cotton, 40 E. 3.

[m] Knighton, A. D. 1382.

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which the university of Oxford, in which he was bred, could bestow upon him. In 1361, when he was thirty-seven years of age, he was elected master of Baliol college [n]; and four years after he was invited by Simon Islip archbishop of Canterbury to accept the function of warden of a new college, which that prelate founded in the university under the name of Canterbury Hall [n]. To this time Wicliffe was conspicuous only for the eminence of his abilities, the profoundness of his disquisitions, and the gravity and elevation of his unblemished character. 1366.

1368. His connection with John of Gaunt.

Two years after the question of the papal tribute, we find him dedicating one of his works to John of Gaunt [o]. This is one of the first unequivocal symptoms of the political ascendancy of this prince, and renders it by no means improbable that John of Gaunt was concerned in the spirited measure of the abolition of the papal tribute. The connection between him and Wicliffe for several years after this is known to have been strict and intimate.

Partiality displayed by John of Gaunt for men of literary genius.

Thus we are led to observe one of the principal and most interesting peculiarities of this accomplished prince, to which he is indebted, perhaps more than to any other, for the proverbial eminence which he has constantly inherited in the mouths of the English people. It was not that he was a man of great splendour and magnificence; it was not that he was a man of a lofty and elevated spirit; it was not that he was an accomplished soldier; other princes have equalled, perhaps exceeded, him in all

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[n] Lewis, Chap. I.

[o] Ditto, Chap. II.

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these attributes. But the faculty by which he discriminated the man of an heaven-born mind, and the sentiment by which he attached himself to such men, and they became attached to him, was peculiarly his own. It is with Wicliffe seated on his right hand, and Chaucer on his left, that we must view John of Gaunt, if we would enter into the merits of his character.

1370.

In June 1370, as we have already seen, Chaucer was employed by the king in a secret commission to the continent. This may be considered as a further indication of the political ascendancy of John of Gaunt, his protector and friend.

1371. Parliamentary remonstrance against the appointment of churchmen to the great offices of state.

In the following year we meet with a very curious transaction, which, in the paucity of authentic information that has come down to us, we can resort to conjecture only to explain. In the parliament which met on the twenty-fourth of February, the lords and commons represented to the king, that the government of the realm had been for a long time in the hands of men of the church, by which many mischiefs had happened in time past, and more might happen in times to come, to the disherison of the crown and great prejudice of the kingdom: they therefore petitioned that secular men only might be principal officers of the king's court and houshold, as particularly chancellor, treasurer, keeper of the privy seal, and the like, and none of the clergy [p]. To this application the king answered, that he would act in this point by the advice of his council [p]. It appears however by the re-

Resignation of the lord chancellor and lord treasurer.

[p] Cotton, 45 Edw. 3.

cords [q], that in the following month William of Wykeham bishop of Winchester resigned the office of chancellor, and Thomas Brentingham bishop of Exeter the staff which he held in quality of treasurer of the realm.

Causes of this revolution.

This circumstance must necessarily have originated in some species of intrigue or confederacy. The parliaments of Edward III. were by no means so powerful as to be enabled to give the law to the throne. When they appear most so they were merely the tools to some clan of courtiers, or some combination of the great barons of the realm. Edward III. was not of a temper inclining him to bend to the insolence of a democracy, or to consent to any measure at the will of a public body, which he had not been previously induced to approve. The most natural solution of the mystery, and that which has been hinted at by several of our old historians, is that the change of administration which now took place, originated in, and was concerted with, John of Gaunt duke of Lancaster [r].

Ascendancy of John of Gaunt in the councils of his father.

Two motives may be assigned for this proceeding; and it is not improbable that both concurred in producing it. The duke of Lancaster was at this time possessed of great power and influence, and was consequently impatient of every thing which tended to traverse that influence. This is the nature of the human mind: a man can scarcely be a wise or a good man, and be void of this sentiment. He must have plans for public honour, improvement or

[q] Rymer, Tom. VI, 45 Edv. 3, Mar. 4. Godwin, De Præsulibus Angliæ.

[r] Parker, De Antiquitate Britannicæ Ecclesiæ, Cap. LVIII. Collier, Ecclesiastical History of Great Britain, Book VI, ad ann.

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happiness, and he cannot fail to be anxious for the execution of these plans. He ought to be easy of conviction, eager for information, and fond of that collision of other men's habits of thinking and his own, which has so powerful a tendency to elicit truth. But, if he be of a clear and manly temper, he cannot be pleased to have his projects thwarted, and other measures, which his understanding condemns, substituted in their room.

History of William of Wykeham.

The most formidable rival the duke of Lancaster could have to encounter in his father's favour and good opinion was William of Wykeham. This celebrated personage, eminent in his own times, and interesting to posterity by his munificent establishments at Winchester and Oxford, was of obscure parentage, and is said to have been indebted for such an education as he received to the charitable interference of some beneficent patron[s]. His biographer, as we have seen, congratulates him on the advantage of never having attended the lectures of any university[t], and his contemporaries, in an age in which, wherever literature was possessed, it was commonly possessed in an eminent degree, were accustomed to call him unlearned. It cannot be doubted however that his sagacity and natural abilities were extraordinary. He was early placed near the person of Edward III[v], and he appears particularly to have won the heart of this splendid monarch by his skill in architecture. He was engaged from the year 1359 in rebuilding on a plan of his own the castle at Windsor[u]; and that illustrious monument of

[s] Lowth, Life of Wykeham, Sect. I.
[t] See Vol. I, Chap. X, p. 197.
[v] Lowth, ubi supra.
[u] Walsingham, ad ann.

ancient art remains to this day for the most part in the state in which Wykeham left it. He also built another favourite residence for his master, at Queenborough in the county of Kent [w]. CHAP. XXXIII. 1371.

His character.

But Wykeham was not merely an architect; he was also a man of business, and in this character was much employed and promoted by Edward III. It is easy for us to raise up to our imagination the character of a man of this sort. He was sober, sagacious and penetrating; with no mercurialness of temper calculated to involve him in disgrace, and no wanderings of theory or of fancy, which might plunge him into error, or subject him to the charge of fluctuation and versatility. Handsome he appears to have been, and tall; with a gravity of countenance fitted to keep impertinence at a distance, and a plausibility of manner which, with the generality of observers, has a more imposing effect than all the flights of genius and all the ardour and enterprise of virtue. So wary was he as a politician, that history has doubted to rank him either among the supporters or opposers of Wicliffe; yet we shall see reason in the sequel to convince us that in a cautious and prudent way he enlisted himself with the persecutors of the new sect. It is indeed natural to suppose that a man of his grave and calm disposition, fond of authority and power, and occupying so high a situation in the church, would adhere rather to the party that was anxious to preserve the prerogatives and splendour of the body of which he was a member, than to those who were

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[w] Lowth, ubi supra.

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desirous to reduce it to its primitive simplicity. Wykeham's habits of business were early and inveterate; his very relaxations were elaborate; and the cast of his mind led him, in his hours of leisure, to delight in drawing plans of buildings of which he was to be the founder, and constructing laws of discipline which he was to see carried into action, and by which he was to direct societies of men even after he should cease to exist[x].

His numerous preferments.

Such was the favourite of the maturer years of Edward III. The king thought he could not do enough for a man whom he found in so many ways useful to him. By his own certificate delivered in to his ordinary before he was bishop of Winchester, it appears that he possessed benefices to the immense amount of £. 873 : 6 : 8[y]; that is, of our money thirteen thousand and one hundred pounds *per annum*. His secular revenues, as keeper of the privy seal, principal secretary of state, and clerk of the works, are not included in this account.

His political revenues.

Still however the king was desirous of conferring upon him something more permanent or more elevated; and there was nothing that so truly possessed these characteristics as some of the higher stations in the church. Wykeham was all-powerful with his master, and had made his choice; he resolved to be bishop of Winchester, in which city he had been educated, and at a village in the neighbourhood of which he was born.

is made bishop of Winchester.

The holder of this bishopric died in October 1366. The king immediately issued his *congé d'élire* to the

[x] Lowth, Sect. VI.

[y] Ditto, Sect. I.

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persons who had the right of electing a successor; the recommendation of Edward III. was unanimously complied with[a]; and Wykeham reached the great object of his ambition. But in these times it was customary to obtain the pope's bull permitting the bishop elect to be consecrated; and Wykeham could not hope for that respect among his brethren of the bench, which was the idol of his heart, if he did not pass through the customary form. It happened, as we have already seen, that the king was at this time deeply involved in a controversy with the pope; and it was to be expected that the sovereign pontiff would make his conferring any benefit upon the favourite minister of Edward III. the price of some concession to be yielded by that monarch. What in other cases was commonly deemed a matter of course, was thus in the present instance raised into an affair of delicacy. In this emergency the king applied to the duke of Bourbon, one of the hostages for the ransom of John king of France, who was now on a leave of absence in that country; and the duke made a journey to Avignon, where the pope resided, for the express purpose of bringing him to compliance. The point was adjusted[a]; and the price of the duke of Bourbon's interference seems to have been his being admitted to ransom in the following year[b]. Froissart, the relater of this story, and who was at this time actually residing at the court of London, introduces the person of the bishop elect in these terms. "Now there

[a] Lowth, Sect. II.

[a] Froissart, Vol. I, Chap. ccxlix.

[b] Rymer, Tom. VI, 42 Edv. 3, Jan. 28.

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reigned in England a priest, by name William of Wican. This Wican was in so entire possession of the royal favour, that every thing was done by him, and without him was nothing done."

His offices of state.

The series of Wykeham's secular promotions was as follows. In 1359 he was appointed clerk of the works; in 1364 keeper of the privy seal, and secretary of state; and in 1367 chancellor [c].

Contrast between John of Gaunt and Wykeham.

Such was the minister whom John of Gaunt undertook to displace. The contrariety of their views was natural and unavoidable. Edward III. at this period of his life loved repose, and Wykeham was a minister fitted to indulge the propensities of his master. Wykeham had no passions adapted to lead him into bold and dangerous ways. He was a lover of money, of magnificence, and of an established and unquestioned respect and authority. His maxim will be perceived to have been, not to remove even an abuse that appeared useful. John of Gaunt was of a very opposite temper. He was in the vigour of his youth, and burned with ambition and a desire to signalise himself. His favourite relaxation was in the society of men of literary genius; he contemplated their improvements and discoveries with delight, and felt anxious to draw something from them for the honour and advantage of his country. It was not his object, as it was that of Wykeham, to pass through life respected and unquestioned; he was desirous to leave a track of splendour and unanticipated benefits behind him.

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[c] Lowth, Sect. I, II.

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Contrivance for the dismission of Wykeham.

By means of the representation of the two estates in parliament, an easy and decent fall was contrived for the king's favourite. It appears as if the measure were concerted between all the three parties: Wykeham was pleased that he was not dismissed by his master; and Edward III. consented to enter willingly into a proceeding which had the appearance of being dictated to him. Parliament passed no censure upon the minister, but pointed their proscription at the order to which he belonged. The king loved his minister; but he had a still stronger affection for his able and accomplished son. The whole transaction appeared the less invidious, as John of Gaunt was at this time employed on the continent; and, so far from there being an absolute breach between him and Wykeham, he made a point, in leaving the kingdom in 1373 and 1375, to appoint the bishop of Winchester one of the trustees and attorneys for him in his absence [d].

Sentiments at this time prevalent respecting the ecclesiastical order.

There is yet another point of view in which the parliamentary representation here spoken of may be considered, and in which it is still more worthy of our remark and attention. One of the many causes of the ascendancy of the clergy in the dark ages was, that the learning of the times being engrossed by them, they were ordinarily the only persons found qualified to fill even the civil offices of the state. They were our historians, our fine writers, and our poets; and they alone possessed the degree of general knowledge and of practice in business, which was necessary in public affairs. Now that the

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[d] Rymer, Tom. VII, 47 Edv. 3, Mai. 12; and 49 Edv. 3, Mar. 1.

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time was come when other candidates might perhaps with equal advantage have entered the lists with them, habit, as usually happens in matters of this sort, prevailed, and churchman succeeded churchman, unquestioned, and as if by an essential law of diplomatical succession. It became a part, as it were, of the religion of our ancestors to see high office combined with the clerical character; and it appeared a sort of sacrilege in their eyes, to behold a chancellor of the realm, or a treasurer of the public revenues, otherwise habited than in the vestments and rochet of a dignified clergyman. The ecclesiastical order, we may be certain, were sufficiently willing to encourage prejudices arising from this source and reluctant to part with one of the fairest appendages of their vocation: so that it came to be thought that they, and only they, had integrity enough for the discharge of so important a trust, and that to withhold it from them was to rob them of their right, and to draw down upon the daring innovator who should attempt it the signal vengeance of their invisible and almighty master.

Origin of these sentiments.

We may well be surprised then to see the parliament of 1371 abruptly and at once entering a rule of general proscription against them; and, consulting the series of public events, we may reasonably class this as one symptom of the progress of the opinions and dogmas of Wicliffe. Wicliffe indeed was as yet new to the great world; and it is perhaps impossible to trace any of those positions which were original and exclusively his own, so far back as to this period. But the mighty germ of innovation of which he was the author, was no doubt before this fermenting in his mind; and the history of this admirable hero of intellect

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has never yet been investigated with sufficient patience and perspicacy, to furnish us with the exact series of the events of his life. When he began his preaching, we know that the progress of his tenets was little less than miraculous; and it is under the date of 1382, only eleven years after this transaction, that Knighton the monkish historian assures us, that every second man throughout England was a Lollard. The vote of 1371 is strongly impressed with the stamp of Wicliffe's intrepidity and decision; and we may justly conclude that it was not passed without his participation, and that at the period which was found ripe for such a measure he had already formed a very considerable party.

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DISASTROUS CAMPAIGN OF 1372.

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IN the close of the year 1371, the new-titled king of Castille, with his brother the earl of Cambridge, and their brides, came over to England; the alleged motive being to consult with his father and the government respecting the plan of the ensuing campaign[a]. He left the command of Aquitaine during his absence in the hands of the captal of Buche, the ablest and most renowned of the soldiers now living who had served under Edward III. The fate of sir John Chandos has already been mentioned; and sir Walter Manny died at an advanced age in this year[a].

Captal of Buche takes the command in Aquitaine.

Death of sir Walter Manny.

1372. Plan of the campaign.

The operations fixed upon for the year 1372 were similar to those employed in 1370. A large army was destined to march from Calais under the command of John of Gaunt, to annoy the enemy, and defy him at the gates of his capital; while the earl of Pembroke, the king's son-in-law, was sent with a considerable reinforcement, to

[a] Froissart, Chap. ccci.

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enable the towns of Aquitaine to hold out against any forces that might be brought against them[b].

1372. Sea-fight of the Spaniards.

But however vigorous and extensive were the preparations on the part of England, the result was one unvaried chain of calamities. The earl of Pembroke reached Rochelle with his convoy and a considerable fleet on the twenty-second of June; but here he found an enemy waiting for him, whom he had by no means expected. Henry of Transtamare, the reigning king of Castille and Leon, had been highly exasperated at the intelligence of John of Gaunt having assumed his titles, and immediately by way of revenge entered into a treaty of close alliance with Charles V. of France. In execution of this treaty he sent a navy of forty strong ships to wait the arrival of the earl of Pembroke off Rochelle. A desperate battle ensued, which continued for two days, and ended in the entire destruction or capture of the English fleet. The use of artillery is said to have materially contributed to the victory of the Spaniards[c].

Its disastrous consequences.

Nothing could have been more critical than this disaster. The towns of Aquitaine were deprived of the expected succours; the abettors of the English party in that country were discouraged; and the scale of events, which already leaned toward the side of France, seemed now to be incapable of recovering its equilibrium. Du Guesclin, who had been appointed constable of France[d], was anxious to put a period to the war. He

Du Guesclin constable of France.

[b] Froissart, Chap. cccii.

[c] Ditto, Chap. cccii, ccciv.

[d] Ditto, Chap, ccxc.

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Capital of Buche made prisoner.

had already taken some considerable towns, when an accident occurred, not less decisive of the fortune of the English arms than the defeat of our navy. The captal of Buche, commander in chief of the forces of Edward III, was surprised in an excursion with a small party of soldiers, and made prisoner of war[e]. The garrisons of Aquitaine were left without a head, and every thing fell into irretrievable confusion. It is worth while to suspend our narrative for a moment to remark, that this gallant soldier, who thus became lost to the English, signalised a few years afterward the tenderness and warmth of his disposition, when, on receiving intelligence in his confinement of the death of the Black Prince, he refused all sustenance, and voluntarily followed his beloved master to the grave[f].

His catastrophe.

Towns of Aquitaine lost.

The towns of Aquitaine now fell rapidly into the hands of the French army. Poitiers, St. Jean d'Angely, Angoulême, Xaintes and Rochelle were numbered among the trophies of their success. Yet most of these places fell sacrifices rather to the gold, than the prowess, of the enemy[g]. The constable next sat down before Thouars, to which the greater part of the lords who still adhered to the English cause had retired. Under the present unfortunate circumstances however, they were speedily driven to capitulate with the enemy for leave to send intelligence of their situation to London, agreeing that, unless the king of England or one of his sons should arrive with succours in the interval, they would open their gates to Du Guesclin on the twenty-ninth of September[h].

Siege of Thouars.

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[e] Froissart, Chap. cccx.

[g] Froissart, Chap. cccix, cccx.

[f] Barnes, Book IV, Chap. xiii, §. 5.

[h] Froissart, Chap. cccxi.

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1372. Edward III, with the Black Prince, the king of Castille, and the earl of Cambridge sails for its relief.

John of Gaunt for some cause had not yet sailed with his army for Calais. Perhaps, before it was completely ready, the news from Aquitaine was considered as so distressful, as to make the projected diversion in the north of France no longer advisable. Edward III. immediately ordered the army destined for that expedition to hold itself in readiness to sail for the relief of Thouars. In addition to its numbers he caused a general enrolment to be made of all the able bodied men throughout his realm [i]; and at length there sailed from Sandwich on the thirtieth of August an army only inferior to the memorable equipment of the autumn of the year 1359, in which Chaucer had been enlisted. The venerable old king went himself on board with his two sons, the king of Castille and the earl of Cambridge. Even the Black Prince tore himself from his chamber of sickness, and resolved once more to encounter the constable of France, whom he had formerly vanquished, but who now threatened to eclipse his martial fame.

driven back by adverse winds.

A still more extraordinary fatality pursued in this instance the efforts of the English arms. The fleet on board which this army was embarked, beat about at sea with contrary winds for nearly a month, without being able to make any port in France. Edward III. saw that it was impossible to reach Thouars by the day appointed, and resolved to return home [k]. Perhaps, according to the superstition of the times, the adverse winds with which they contended, were considered as a declaration of heaven against their undertaking. It may be believed that

He returns home.

[i] Barnes, Book IV, Chap. ix, §. 20.

[k] Froissart, ubi supra.

CHAP. XXXIV. 1372. if John of Gaunt, a young prince of high spirit, in perfect health, and only thirty-two years of age, had had the sole command, so mighty a preparation would not have returned thus ingloriously into harbour. But the old king was broken in health, afflicted at the incurable infirmity of his eldest son, had retired from the direction of public affairs, and was sunk in mind by the repeated miscarriages of his arms. Thus the obstinacy and frowardness of his age set a seal upon the loss of those provinces in France, which his prowess and vigour had formerly acquired.

CHAP. XXXV.

EXPEDITION OF THE KING OF CASTILLE.—TRUCE BETWEEN FRANCE AND ENGLAND.—CHAUCER IN ITALY.—INTERVIEW WITH PETRARCA.

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1373. Grand march of the English through France.

THE last campaign of this eventful and disastrous war was in the year 1373. The king of Castille now resumed the plan in which he had already engaged, of a march through France. He saw how desperate the state of the English affairs in that country had become, and felt that there was no other remedy in his power. A war of sieges for the recovery of Aquitaine would probably, according to the maxims of war which now obtain, have been unadvisable; but in the period of which we are treating it was altogether impossible. Neither the revenues of our kings, nor the conditions on which their armies served in the field, would allow it.

The English commander, at the head of thirty thousand men, commenced his expedition from Calais, and directed his march through Artois, Picardy, Champagne, Burgundy, the Lyonnois, Auvergne and Limousin, concluding this extensive course, which occupied a period of between

CHAP. XXXV. 1373. three and four months, at Bourdeaux[a]. Though the French armies had been continually improving, in courage, and by means of the growing unanimity of every part of the kingdom, and though they were commanded by Du Guesclin, who is said to have been the first consummate general that had appeared in Europe, yet the king of Castille suffered little molestation in his march, and sustained no other losses (though these were by no means inconsiderable) than seemed unavoidably attendant upon so vast an undertaking. He hoped by so galling an insult to have provoked the French to a battle; but this was by no means accordant to the disposition of Charles V. If he failed in this, he at least pleased himself with the idea that the plan of his campaign was what no other general hostile to France had ever executed, conceiving that, by so comprehensive an undertaking, if the issue of the war must be unfortunate, he should best preserve it from the appearance of dishonour.

Negociations. The English army reached Bourdeaux in the beginning of November. This was the last considerable attempt on the part of Edward III. against the dominions of France. Negociations for peace were soon after opened between the two crowns; and, particularly during the greater part of the year 1375, conferences were held at Bruges, between the king of Castille and the duke of Burgundy, younger brother to the king of France[b]. But these led to no perfect conclusion. Edward III, indignant at the scandalous and dishonourable way in which the war had begun,

[a] Froissart, Chap. cccxvi, cccxvii.

[b] Ditto, Chap. cccxx, cccxxii.

could not prevail upon himself to entertain any other terms than those of the treaty of Bretigni; while Charles V. was disposed to dictate like a conqueror, to retain all the acquisitions he had made, and to insist upon the demolition of Calais, the possession of which by the English he viewed with great impatience, as affording them at all times a ready entrance for invading his dominions[c]. Bayonne and Bourdeaux, two capital towns which we still possessed to the south-west of France, made no part of the subject of these discussions: the sovereign of that country did not yet think the English sufficiently humbled to resign such valuable possessions.

Truce between England and France.

Peace between two sovereigns, whose ideas were at present so discordant from each other, being impossible, the only expedient which offered in its place was that of a truce. This was accordingly resorted to, and afterward continued by various prolongations to the first of April 1377[d].

Reflections.

The war of 1369 for preserving the English acquisitions in France was more strenuous, and carried on with more method, perseverance and activity, than the wars in which they had been obtained. The expedition of the king of Castille in 1373 was of the same nature as those which led to the victories of Cressy, Poitiers and Azincour, but conducted with more judgment, since in those instances the French had no such general as Du Guesclin to oppose to the invader, and since it is universally acknowledged that

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[c] Froissart, Chap. cccxxiv.

[d] Rymer, Tom. VII, 49 Edv. 3, Feb. 11, and Jun. 27; and 50 Edv. 3, Mar. 12.

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in each of them, if the French had refused to fight, the English armies must have been reduced to surrender prisoners of war. No human abilities, with the slender and temporary resources which were then capable of being called forth, could have preserved the province of Aquitaine, against the cautious and crafty measures of Charles V, the generalship of Du Guesclin, and the prevalent disaffection of the lords and inhabitants of the country we had to maintain. Yet, such is the delusive brilliancy which attends upon success, the eulogiums are endless which are pronounced upon the lucky temerity of Edward III. and the Black Prince, while the war of 1369 is passed over by our historians with unintelligible brevity, and the astonishing march of 1373 has never received the slightest tribute of applause.

Chaucer appointed ambassador to Genoa.

In the close of the preceding year we find Chaucer nominated an envoy to the republic of Genoa[e]. To understand the distinction which this appointment bestowed upon him, we must not consider Genoa as she has appeared in later times, but must recollect her as she was in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when she thought herself entitled to give laws to the world. Genoa, Venice, and the other maritime states of Italy, were indebted for their consequence to the crusades, which, while they vexed and impoverished the greater kingdoms of Europe, brought to these ports, particularly by the demand they created for hiring transport-vessels, an immense acquisition of wealth and power. Narrow in its domestic

Importance of this republic during the reign of the Plantagenets

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[e] Appendix, No. V.

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territory, Genoa was great and formidable by its foreign settlements and possessions. The Genoese obtained, from the concession of the Greek emperor, the city of Smyrna in Asia Minor, and the suburb of Pera adjoining to Constantinople; and, having fortified this suburb, they were enabled occasionally to overawe the capital itself. They acquired possession of Caffa in the Crimea, of Ceuta and Tripoli in Barbary, and of the Greek islands of Lesbos and Mitylene[f]. They were not less distinguished for courage than for industry; and accordingly, while they enriched themselves by being the brokers of the world, they diffused widely the terror of their name by the gallantry of their soldiers, and their astonishing naval victories.

Connection between Genoa and England.

During the reign of Edward II, and still more during that of Edward III, we find them by our records repeatedly engaged in treaties with this country[g]. The objects of these treaties are variously, compensations to the Genoese for injuries done to them by the English, stipulations for neutrality on their part during the contention between France and England, and contracts for hiring from them ships of war to reinforce our armaments. In all these treaties express engagements are entered into for the security of the merchant-ships of Genoa, while nothing of a similar nature is demanded on behalf of England; which, it has been observed[h], is a clear proof that the

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[f] Gibbon, Chap. LXIII. Anderson, A. D. 1231, 1261, 1355.

[g] Rymer, Tom. III, 10 Edv. 2, Jul. 16, 18; Tom. IV, 10 Edv. 3, Jul. 4; Tom. VI, 45 Edv. 3, Feb. 1.

[h] Anderson, A. D. 1372.

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trade which existed between the two countries was entirely carried on in Genoese bottoms. During the war for the monarchy of France, the Genoese occasionally disposed of their vessels to both the contending parties. For the service of the siege of Calais in 1347 we find Edward III. hiring from the Genoese twelve gallies completely manned and equipped[i]; and in November 1372 a similar contract appears to have been made, the king having constituted by patent Peter de Campo Fregoso, brother to the doge of Genoa, commander in chief of the Genoese vessels in his service, and sir James Pronan, probably an Englishman, his lieutenant[k].

Genoese squadron hired by Edward III.

Objects of Chaucer's embassy.

Judging from the rank of the admiral of this squadron, we may conclude that the aid thus hired from the Genoese was by no means inconsiderable. Meanwhile, the republic having frequently found occasion to complain of the depredations committed upon them by the less commercial and more lawless English[l], this was deemed a fit time for placing the mercantile connection of the two countries upon a more unquestionable footing. Accordingly, in the following month, a commission was made out to three persons to proceed as envoys to Genoa, for the purpose of agreeing upon some town or spot on the sea-coast of our island, at which the Genoese might establish a regular factory; as well as for ascertaining the franchises, liberties and immunities, to be enjoyed by the citizens of the re-

[i] Rymer, Tom. V, 21 Edv. 3, Apr. 13.
[k] Ditto, Tom. VI, 46 Edv. 3, Nov. 22, 23.
[l] Ditto, Tom. IV, 10 Edv. 3, Jul. 4; Tom. VI, 44 Edv. 3, Nov. 28, Dec. 6.

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public, in their intended English factory, and in all other places of the kingdom to which they might resort for the purposes of commerce. The envoys was three: first, sir James Pronan was taken from his station as vice-admiral of the Genoese auxiliaries, to be put at the head of the embassy: the second in the enumeration is John de Mari, a citizen of Genoa; and the third Chaucer. The Italian in some respects appears to have been made of more importance than either of his associates, since it is provided that any two of the three envoys shall be competent to conclude upon any point to which their joint powers extend, with this express condition, that John de Mari shall in all cases be one of the concurring parties. If, as is most likely, some place in England was finally agreed upon by these commissioners as an *entrepôt* and factory for the merchants of the republic of Genoa, it is probable that the name of the particular port selected for this purpose is now no where to be discovered. We have here then a further example of the consideration with which Chaucer was treated by his contemporaries. Sir James Pronan, a knight during the prevalence of chivalry and a vice-admiral, must certainly be regarded as a person of rank; of John de Mari we know nothing specifical in this respect, but we find him, as to the essentials of the embassy, put before sir James Pronan. Chaucer was deemed, in these days of chivalrous ostentation and disdain, a fit person to be associated in their mission.

His tour of the north of Italy.

Chaucer, the business of his embassy being concluded, made a tour of the northern states of Italy. The proof of this lies in the verses with which he introduces the

CHAP. XXXV. 1373. Clerk of Oxenfordes tale.

clerk of Oxenfordes narrative in the Canterbury Tales, which the speaker informs the company he

> Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk,—
> Fraunceis Petrark.
>
> CANTERBURY TALES, ver. 7903.

Now it happens that we possess information respecting this tale in the letters of Petrarca, enabling us with sufficient evidence to reduce this slight hint into a point of history, and to fix its chronology. The narrative attributed to the clerk of Oxenford, is the well known and exquisitely pathetic story of Patient Grisildis, perhaps the happiest of all the effusions of Chaucer's muse. Petrarca expresses himself thus on the subject in a letter addressed to Boccaccio, of the date of the eighth of June 1373[m].

"Your work of the Decamerone fell for the first time into my hands in an excursion I made to Arqua a few weeks ago. Not having had time to peruse the whole, I did as ordinary readers are accustomed to do, fixed my attention principally upon the commencement and the conclusion. The description with which you set out, of the condition of our common country under the visitation of the plague, appeared to me equally just in the conception and pathetic in the execution. The narrative with which your work concludes [the tale of Grisildis] particularly struck me. When I considered that this story had affected me

[m] De Obedientia et Fide Uxoria: Opera, Ed. Bas. 1581, Tom. I, sub finem.

deeply in the hearing many years ago, and that you had regarded it with so much approbation as to be induced to translate it into Italian, and even to place it as the crown of your performance, where we are taught by the simplest rules of rhetoric to put whatever we regard as strongest and most persuasive, I was confirmed in the inclination I felt to confide in my present feelings. I therefore readily yielded to the propensity which impelled me to translate it into Latin, with such variations as my fancy suggested; and I now send the translation to you, in the hope that you will not entirely disapprove of what I have done."

The coincidence of this letter with the period of Chaucer's embassy, may sufficiently convince us that what he makes the clerk of Oxenford say of having learned the tale from Petrarca at Padua (where Petrarca then resided) is to be construed as applying to himself. But this construction fortunately comes confirmed to us by several other circumstances.

The story is told by Boccaccio in his Decamerone, a performance with which Chaucer was familiarly acquainted, and is even so far honoured by the author of that production, as to be placed by him last in his work, as the crown and completion of his series. Why did Chaucer chuse to confess his obligation for it to Petrarca, rather than to Boccaccio, from whose volume Petrarca confessedly translated it? For this very natural reason: because he was eager to commemorate his interview with this venerable patriarch of Italian letters, and to record the pleasure he had reaped from his society. Chaucer could not do this more effectually, than by mentioning his having learned from the lips of Petrarca a tale

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which had been previously drawn up and delivered to the public by another. We may defy all the ingenuity of criticism to invent a different solution for the simple and decisive circumstance of Chaucer having gone out of his way, in a manner which he has employed on no other occasion, to make the clerk of Oxenford confess that he learned the story from Petrarca, and even assign the exact place of Petrarca's residence in the concluding part of his life.

Motives of Chaucer in this excursion.

It is not possible for us at this distance of time to ascertain whether Chaucer travelled across the northern part of Italy, from the Mediterranean sea to the Adriatic, principally to visit the great laureated poet of that country, whose fame during his own life-time was perhaps louder and more awe-inspiring than ever fell to the lot of any other mortal; or whether he was partly moved by the desire of beholding the other great maritime state of the fourteenth century, the rival of Genoa the Proud, Venice, which was only twenty-two miles distant from the residence of Petrarca. On the road also he might visit Mantua, the birth place of Virgil, Verona, which had given existence to Claudian, and many other places profusely adorned with the witchery of nature, or rendered mysteriously interesting by the associations of former times. The visit to Petrarca however is the only incident of this journey which Chaucer has thought fit to transmit to posterity.

Interview with Petrarca.

Feelings of Chaucer on this occasion.

Petrarca was at this time nearly seventy years of age; and he survived only by twelve months the visit of the English poet. It must have been a striking object to Chaucer, to behold this grey-headed, yet impassioned, poet in a period

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when the gift of poetry was so exceedingly rare; this correspondent of popes, of states, and of emperors; this poet who had been crowned by Paris and Rome, and from whose compositions Chaucer's infant lips had perhaps first drunk in the numerousness of verse. Petrarca was interesting to Chaucer, because Chaucer saw in him as it were the lineal descendant of the Ciceros, the Virgils and the Ovids of Italy in the days of its classical greatness. Chaucer was interesting to Petrarca for a different reason. He came from the *ultima Thule*, the *penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos* [n]; that country which the wantonness of more genial climates among the ancients had represented as perpetually enveloped in fogs and darkness. To later times the literature and poetical genius of Britain is familiar; no tongue so barbarous, as not to confess us the equals, while in reality we are in intellectual eminence the masters, of mankind. But this was a spectacle altogether unknown in the times of Petrarca. The discovery he made was scarcely less astonishing than that of Columbus when he reconnoitred the shores of the Western world. He interrogated his guest; he proposed to him his most trying and difficult criterions; he exchanged with him the glances of mind, and the flashes of a poet's eye. Chaucer had already written his Troilus and Creseide, and many of his most meritorious productions; he was more than forty years of age; we may imagine how he answered the ordeal of the Italian, and stood up to him with the sober and manly consciousness of a poet to a poet. Petrarca

Feelings of Petrarca.

[n] Virgil. Bucolica, Ecl. I.

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hesitated, suspected, and at length became wholly a convert; he embraced the wondrous stranger from a frozen clime, and foresaw, with that sort of inspiration which attends the closing period of departing genius, the future glories of a Spenser, a Shakespear and a Milton.

He reads to Chaucer his tale of Patient Grisildis.

We are fortunately in possession of a clue which may explain to us the tone of the conversation which passed between Petrarca and Chaucer. Petrarca had just finished his version of the tale of Grisildis. He had put it into the hands of one of his friends, a citizen of Padua. His friend attempted to read it aloud; but he had no sooner got into the incident of the tale than he found himself obliged to desist; his voice was choaked with tears. He repeated his trial with the same effect; after a little while sighs and groans overpowered his utterance. Petrarca made the same experiment upon another of his friends, a Veronese, who read the story from beginning to end without the slightest change of accent or attitude. Petrarca, surprised at the contrast, asked his friend the reason. "Oh," said the Veronese, "I should have wept as much as my neighbour, had I not known the story to be a fable. But it is impossible to be true. There is no such woman; there never was a woman who could stand such trials, and show herself so inaccessible to the approaches of frailty."

Tone of their conversation.

Petrarca read this tale to Chaucer. This is a proof of the opinion he formed of our countryman. When an old man is persuaded to repose a perfect confidence, and to feel an entire sympathy, he opens his heart, he tells the subject of his last efforts and meditations, he pours out the ideas of which his thoughts are full. It was thus that Petrarca

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treated Chaucer. He put him instantly upon the footing of his ancient friends, and read to him what he had just before communicated to the Paduan and the Veronese. Chaucer was entranced. The magic of a tale, perhaps the most pathetic that human fancy ever conceived, heard under the sacred roof of him in whom the genius of modern poetry seemed to be concentred, and from the aged lips of him to whom that roof was indebted for its sacredness, was all together a surprise, a feast, a complication of sentiment and of pleasure, such as it has fallen to the lot of few mortals to partake. Having heard the tale, Chaucer requested of Petrarca permission to take a copy of it. So much is implied, when he makes the clerk of Oxenford say that he

Chaucer requests a copy of the tale.

> Lern'd it at Padowe of a worthy clerk,——
> Fraunceis Petrark.

Under the person of the clerk of Oxenford Chaucer has contrived, probably for the sake of increasing the identity in this particular, to have in several respects a reference to himself. Thus,

describes himself under the person of the clerk of Oxenford.

> For [o] him was lever han at his beddes hed
> A twenty bokés, cloth'd in black or red,
> Of Aristotle', and his philosophie,
> Than robés riche, or [p] fidel, or sautrie.
>
> CANTERBURY TALES, ver. 295.

Chaucer has repeatedly informed us of his love of reading,

[o] he would rather have.

[p] fiddle, or psaltery.

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and his propensity to read in his sleepless hours in bed. Again,

> Not a word spake he moré than was nede;
> And that was said in forme and reverence;
> . . . .
> And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.
>
> ver. 306.

is introduced by Petrarca to an acquaintance with the works of Boccaccio.

A further illustration of the literary history of Chaucer suggests itself to us in this place. If Chaucer learned the history of Grisildis from Petrarca at Padua (and it would imply an idle and wanton imputation upon the veracity of Chaucer to doubt it), it then follows, though Boccaccio began his Decamerone shortly after the plague in 1348, that the work was not yet sufficiently familiar to the most enlightened and studious part of the English public in 1373, for Chaucer to be aware of the contents of the most admirable story it contains. Chaucer "lerned it of Petrark;" he was therefore unacquainted with it previously to that time. If Chaucer in 1373 had little or no knowledge of what has ever been the most popular work of Boccaccio, what probability is there that in his youth he translated the Troilus and Creseide, and the Palamon and Arcite, from the versions of that author? Chaucer was early conversant with the writings of Petrarca[q]; but the unrivalled fame of Petrarca threw for some time a sort of obscurity upon the more natural and unpretending effusions of his Florentine contemporary. It is not improbable that

[q] Troilus and Creseide, Book I, ver. 401.

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Chaucer carried home with him from this tour the Decamerone, and perhaps the other works of Boccaccio. Petrarca told him from whose volume he had translated his tale: the venerable patriarch of Italian poetry informed Chaucer, that the goodness of his friend's heart could only be equalled by the eminence of his genius, and assured him that he would reap abundance of delight from the perusal of his performances. Chaucer on his part must have felt no little curiosity to become acquainted with the writings of a man who had written in volumes of Italian verse, two stories which had formerly occupied a considerable portion of his own lucubrations.

The visit of Chaucer not mentioned by Petrarca or his biographers.

Mr. Tyrwhit has objected to the credibility of the interview with Petrarca here described, that he "cannot help thinking that a reverential visit *from a Minister of the King of England* would have been so flattering to the old man, that either he himself or some of his biographers must have recorded it[r]." But this objection is easily answered.

Silence of Petrarca accounted for.

Petrarca was certainly not deficient in vanity; but his vanity had been fed at various times with viands more flattering than "a reverential visit *from a Minister of the King of England*." If indeed Petrarca had received this visit in early or in middle life, when his vanity was most alive and eager for enjoyment, and when he poured out his feelings, and the little incidents of a studious life, in voluminous letters to his friends, we may easily believe that the visit of Chaucer would have been found an event of sufficient magnitude to be recorded by his pen. But

[r] Introductory Discourse, note 20.

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there is a period in human life, when vanity, like all the other passions, ceases from its restlessness and its craving, and when gratifications which before would have raised the soul into a tumult of enjoyment, but just serve to ruffle for a moment the quiet surface. This might well be the case with Petrarca, when he was within twelve months of the close of a feverish and agitated existence. Most of the friends too to whom he had been accustomed to vent his garrulity were gone before him. And, what is sufficiently remarkable, the letter to Boccaccio, which was in all probability written previously to the visit of Chaucer, appears to be the last letter the aged poet ever wrote. Petrarca found, or imagined, that his letters were intercepted and opened on the road by men of taste, for the purpose of transcribing the ingenious sallies, or the flashes of eloquence, with which they should happen to be interspersed. At length, he says, the marauders grew weary of this modest and orderly species of theft, and retained his paquets, that they might save themselves the trouble of transcribing them. Disgusted at this violation of the laws of civilised life, hostile to all the confidence of intercourse and society, he formed the determination to write no more. This resolution he announces in the letter in question, in which he takes his leave in form of his friends and of correspondence: "*Valete, amici; valete, epistolæ.*"

Of his Italian biographers.

As to the biographers of Petrarca, the reader who has examined the account which De Sade gives of his predecessors, will not be surprised at any anachronism, omission or absurdity, of which they may have been guilty.

Language of De Sade on the subject.

The case of De Sade himself as to the point in question, is still more singular. In the preface to the second of his

three extensive quartos, he has announced his intention of proving to his readers that Chaucer was in connection *(en liaison)* with Petrarca; but this engagement he has not performed in the sequel of his work. Mr. Tyrwhit in consequence "suspects that his more accurate researches have not enabled the author to verify an opinion, which he probably at first adopted upon the credit of some biographer of Chaucer[a]." But this is not the only, nor the most natural, solution. De Sade has not advanced his statement precipitately; not in the preface to his first, but to his second volume. The promise being made when this volume was published, could only refer to the sequel of the work. But the author at length became alarmed at the labour, or the gigantic appearance, of his production. In the third volume, published three years later than the second, he has entirely changed his plan. He had divided his history into six books, of which the first two volumes contain three, while the other three are compressed into the remaining volume. In this concluding volume he has entirely suppressed his Appendix of Notes and Illustrations. He professes also to have omitted all details which were not absolutely essential to his subject. It is easy to conceive then that the particulars which related to Chaucer may have been among those he omitted.

What were the documents, if any, which De Sade refers to on this subject, I have not been able to discover. Perhaps they yet exist in manuscript in the curious collections of this nature in Italy or France.

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[a] Introd. Discourse, p. 20.

CHAP. XXXV. 1373. Conclusion.

But, be this as it will, a man must have Mr. Tyrwhit's appetite for the fascinating charms of a barren page and a meagre collection of dates, not to perceive that the various coincidences enumerated; — Chaucer representing the speaker as having learned his tale from Petrarca at Padua, though it was previously the property of Boccaccio; Padua being then Petrarca's actual residence; the embassy of Chaucer to Genoa in 1373; and Petrarca having in that very year translated the tale into Latin prose;—not to perceive, I say, that these coincidences furnish a basis of historical probability, seldom to be met with in points of this nature.

CHAP. XXXVI.

WICLIFFE APPOINTED TO NEGOCIATE WITH THE POPE'S COMMISSIONERS AT BRUGES.—CHAUCER RECEIVES A GRANT OF A PITCHER OF WINE *PER DIEM* FOR LIFE.—HIS PROBABLE INCOME.—HIS MORAL AND SOCIAL HABITS.—IS APPOINTED COMPTROLLER OF THE CUSTOMS.

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THE question of the papal provisions and reservations, notwithstanding the several acts of parliament which had been passed on the subject, was as yet far from being settled. The affair was of a peculiar nature: the clergy of the different states of Christendom at this time acknowledged two independent heads on earth; and it was therefore by no means considered as the token of a discontented and turbulent disposition, if on any particular occasion they avowed the necessity under which they were placed to obey the pope, and to disregard the injunctions of the sovereign and legislature of their country. This in our eyes perhaps may seem a violent and factious proceeding; in theirs it was sober and grave and decent, and tended to raise, not to degrade, him who adopted it, in the opinion of the most respectable of his contemporaries. The question therefore of the pope's reservations could only be settled by mutual

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negociation and compromise, between the head of the church on one part, and the temporal monarch of the kingdom in which it was agitated on the other.

Embassy to the pope on the subject of his provisions.

Perceiving the necessity of this system of proceeding, the English government, now as it should seem under the exclusive influence of the king of Castille, prepared a solemn embassy to the pope at Avignon, to endeavour to adjust with him by an amicable accommodation this important affair[a]. The principal in this embassy was John Gilbert bishop of Bangor, accompanied by one knight and one regular and one secular clergyman. The pontiff who now presided in the holy see was Gregory XI, who had been raised to the papacy in the room of Urban V, in January 1371[b]. All that these ambassadors could obtain from the pope was his assent to a congress to be held on these points at any place which the court of London should think proper to name, to which he agreed to send certain persons authorised for the purpose, to meet the commissioners and plenipotentiaries of the king of England[a].

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Account taken of the benefices held by foreigners.

The place fixed upon for this congress was Bruges. But, previously to the nomination of the ministers of Edward III, the king issued his writ, as he had once before done in the year 1347[c], to the bishops in their different dioceses, requiring them to make a return of all ecclesiastical dignities or benefices held by Italians and other foreigners, of the value of these benefices, the names of the incumbents,

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[a] Cotton, ad ann. Rymer, Tom. VII, 48 Edv. 3, Mar. 11, Mai. 4 and Jul. 26.

[b] De Sade, ad ann.

[c] Cotton, ad ann.

and whether the holders were resident or non-resident[d]. An ample return having been made to this requisition, the king proceeded in July 1374 to appoint his representatives to the congress; and these consisted of seven persons, the bishop of Bangor as before being at the head, and Wicliffe's being the second name in the commission[e].

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1374. Ecclesiastical congress at Bruges.

Wicliffe one of the commissioners.

This is to be considered as undoubtedly bearing no favourable aspect upon the papal claims. Wicliffe was a man who, almost from the time when he had first been heard of, had been distinguished by his opposition to the incroachments of the court of Rome. He began as the champion of the university of Oxford against the mendicant friars, and his zeal led him to a very rough and severe invective against these fraternities, whose interests the pope had ever deeply at heart. His next public effort was his argument against the tribute imposed by king John upon the realm of England; by which he had strongly recommended himself both to the sovereign and the parliament. He had been appointed, as we have seen[f], by Islip archbishop of Canterbury, warden of Canterbury Hall in Oxford, of which that primate was the founder. To make room for Wicliffe, Islip had turned out of the wardenship Henry de Wodehal a monk[g], either on account of some private misunderstanding, or because the archbishop was determined to take the part of the university against the regular clergy. Islip died in 1366, and was succeeded by Simon Langham

[d] Fox, Acts and Monuments, Vol. I, ad ann.

[e] Rymer, 48 Edv. 3, Jul. 26.

[f] Chap. XXXIII.

[g] Lewis, Chap. I.

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bishop of Ely, who was raised to the primacy by a papal provision[h]. Langham, himself a regular, and who had been abbot of Westminster, was led by professional feeling to take part with the displaced warden; and one of his first official proceedings[i], in defiance of the act of the founder of the college, had been to issue an archiepiscopal mandate to restore Wodehal, and to expel Wicliffe and the seculars from Canterbury Hall. This ejectment, after a tedious negociation before pope Urban V, was confirmed by that pontiff in 1370[k]. Wicliffe however by no means sustained any diminution of his credit with the university from this circumstance; and, two years after, he was elected their professor in divinity[l], by which style he is described in the king's letters patent appointing him to the congress at Bruges. What were the topics and the style of his professorial lectures at this time we are not told; we shall presently have occasion to observe what they were on his return from his embassy.

Harsh treatment he experienced from the pope.

Is made divinity-professor to the university of Oxford.

Chaucer receives a grant of a pitcher of wine *per diem.*

In the month of April this year Chaucer had a grant conferred upon him of a pitcher of wine *per diem*, to be delivered daily in the port of the city of London by the king's chief butler, during the term of his natural life[m].

Observations.

Some amusement, and even instruction, perhaps may arise, if we digress a little on this occasion into the consideration of the value and object of this grant, and of the

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[h] Godwin: archiepiscopi Cant. cap. lv.

[i] Lewis, ubi supra.

[k] Mandatum Apostolicum Urbani V, apud Lewis.

[l] Lewis, Chap. II.

[m] Appendix, No. VI.

manners and style of living of our ancestors, as illustrated by this incident. CHAP. XXXVI.

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It is a great mistake to suppose, as we find it represented in several common books, that wine continued to be sold in England as a cordial, by the apothecaries only, till after the year 1300. To go no further back than to the accession of the Plantagenet race in 1154, the English government at that time gained possession of Bourdeaux and some other important places to the south-west of France, which with little interruption they continued to hold for three centuries. Hence we drew considerable supplies of this commodity. The consumption of Thomas earl of Lancaster for the year 1313 has already been mentioned [a], amounting in one year to one hundred and eighty-four tuns. In this particular then, as well as in most others relating to diet, the old English gentry lived generously; and, if wine conduces in any degree to expand the imagination, neither Chaucer, nor perhaps the writers of the old romances who went before him, wanted this sort of aliment to nourish their poetic heat. Use of wine in the fourteenth century.

What appears to be an authentic record of the price of wine at the close of the twelfth century occurs in Stow's Chronicle, under the year 1199. "King Iohn," says this historian, "made a law, that no tunne of [b] Rochell wine should bee solde dearer then xx. shillings, of Anjow for xxiiii. shillings, and of France xxv. shillings, and not above, unlesse the same were of such principal goodnesse, Its price in 1199.

[a] Vol. I, Chap. VII, p. 104.

[b] In the *Annales Burtonenses*, where this precept is recorded, the term is Poitou wine, *vinum Pictavense*. Ann. Burt. ad ann.

CHAP. XXXVI. 1374. that some for their use would give [p] twenty sixe shillings foure pence for the tunne, and not above in any case. A [q] gallon (by retale) of [r] Rochell wine to be sold for 4 pence, the [q] gallon of white wine not above vi pence. It was also ordeined, that in everie citie, towne and place where wyne was used to be solde, there should be xii. honest men sworne to have regarde that this assize shoulde not bee broken: and if that they found any vintner that should sell any wine by small measures contrary to the same assize, his body should be attached by the sheriffe and detained in prison, till order was taken for his further punishment, and his goods seized to the kings use: and the like punishment was appoynted for such as should sell by the tunne, hogshead, or otherwise, contrary to the assize."

and in 1383. In Rymer we find a proclamation of Richard II, of the date of 1383 [s], still further calculated to throw light upon the subject. It is addressed to the mayor and sheriffs of the city of London, and has for its object to inforce the execution of an act of parliament of the preceding year. It directs that no tun of the best wine of Gascony, Oseye or Spain shall be sold for more than one hundred shillings, and wine of an inferior sort from those countries for no more than six, six and an half, or seven, marks respectively; and it fixes at an inferior rate the assize of Rochelle wine, the lowest price being four marks. It

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[p] Two marks. Ann. Burt.

[q] Sextarius. Ann. Burt. Fleetwood (Chron. Prec. Chap. IV.) infers that this measure must have exceeded a gallon, since, at £. 1 *per* tun, the price of the gallon ought not to have been more than one penny.

[r] Poitou. Ann. Burt.

[s] Tom. VII, 6 Ric. 2, Feb. 3.

further determines the retail price of the *lagena* of wine at six pence and four pence according to the quality of the wine. The term *pipa*, or pipe, of wine also occurs in this proclamation, and was probably used in the old document of the expenditure of Thomas earl of Lancaster in 1313, as it is employed by Stow in his report of that document[t], where it seems clearly to mean the half of a tun, as at present.

Measures of wine at this time in use.

The word in the proclamation of Richard II. which I have translated tun, is in the original *dolium*; and in this sense, I apprehend, this Latin word is constantly used in our old records. The *lagena*, as appears from the above statement, is rated at the two hundredth part of the price of the tun, and may therefore reasonably be supposed to correspond to our modern gallon[u], of which there are two hundred and fifty-two in a tun. This excess of fifty-two may be considered as no more that an equitable allowance to the retail trader, for the waste occurring when we divide a larger weight or measure into a multitude of smaller, and for the greater trouble and expence attending upon a retail trade in proportion to the capital employed.

Dimensions of the pitcher.

The translation given by our Latin-English dictionary-makers of the term *lagena*, is flagon, or flask, which will probably be admitted to correspond pretty exactly to the more customary English word pitcher. These two, the *dolium* and pitcher *(pycher)* are the only two measures of

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[t] Survey of London: of orders and customs.

[u] The word is thus explained by Fleetwood, ubi supra. He adds that from *lagena* comes the word *flagon*.

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wine occurring in the grants to Chaucer; and, their sense being fixed, the inferences to be made will then proceed without difficulty. In like manner, the *dolium* and *lagena* appear, in the proclamation of Richard II, to be the two great wholesale and retail measures of wine used at that time. We seem then to have sufficient ground to conclude that the *lagena* and *pycher* exactly correspond to each other, and, if there be any force in the reasonings of the last paragraph, that they are each of them commensurate to our modern gallon of eight pints.

Value of Chaucer's grant.

It is probable that the wine given by the king, and directed to be delivered by the hands of his chief butler, was intended to be of the first quality. One gallon *per diem* appears from the proclamation of Richard II, which was only nine years posterior to the grant to Chaucer, to have been rated as nearly equal in value to two tuns, or £. 10, *per annum*. Hence we collect a trivial illustration of the vicissitudes of our poet's fortune. In 1374 he has a grant of one pycher *per diem*, or £. 10 a year. In 1378, the first year of Richard, he has twenty marks, or £. 13 : 6 : 8 *per annum*, in compensation of this wine[x]. And in 1398, having been compelled by distress, ten years before, to dispose of these grants, he has a tun of wine *per annum*[y], which, if its value had not risen from the time of the proclamation before quoted, was not worth more than £. 5. It has already been mentioned that the money of that time may be computed to be equal to eighteen times the money of the same denomination at present; so that, if we are to

[x] Appendix, No.

[y] Appendix, No.

take the price fixed by the proclamation of Richard II. upon the best wine, as a measure of the value of Chaucer's grant, he may be considered as having now obtained a second life-annuity of £. 180, in addition to the life-annuity of £. 240 granted to him in the year 1367.

Imputed connection between wine and poetry.

It is a curious question to examine, how far this grant of wine was connected with the association of ideas, which has prevailed, perhaps ever since the times of Homer and Anacreon, of a certain alliance between the juice of the grape and poetry. I find a grant, or rather the confirmation of a grant [a], of Edward III, in the first year of his reign, to Mary, his aunt, daughter of Edward I, of ten tuns of wine *per annum*, toward her sustenance. But the princess Mary was a votaress, and cannot be supposed to have wanted ten tuns of wine annually for her own consumption; and the phraseology of the grant [*in subventum sustentationis suæ*] seems to imply rather that it was a commodity to be given in exchange for other commodities, than to be consumed in kind by the grantee. Chaucer's wine was almost certainly intended for the poet's immediate use. Whatever might be the motive in which this grant originated, it is likely that the grant of a tierce of wine [the third part of a pipe] annually to Ben Jonson, and something similar to other poets-laureat since his time, has sprung from this allowance to Chaucer, in the same manner as the burial of poets since his time in a certain compartment of Westminster Abbey has originated in the accident of his being buried there.

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[a] Rymer, Tom. IV, 1 Edv. 3, Feb. 26.

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Probable amount of Chaucer's income.

The circumstance of Chaucer's receiving his allowance of wine daily, seems to afford a considerable presumption that it was consumed from day to day as it was received. From this fact we may derive a reasonable inference as to the extent of Chaucer's fortune. We find him consuming four pipes of wine annually, the price of which, stated in modern denominations of money, was £. 180, or £. 45 *per* pipe. The question then which it is necessary for us to examine is, what may be taken to be the whole annual expenditure of a man, whose consumption is to this amount in the single article of wine? It seems to be the height of absurdity to suppose that Chaucer's entire disbursements under every other article were comprehended within the limits of his pension of twenty marks, that is, of £. 240 of modern money. Proceeding upon this datum of his grant of wine, we cannot with probability take his entire revenue at this period at a lower valuation than £. 1000 of modern money, which, reduced into the denominations of Chaucer's time, is £. 55 : 11 : $1\frac{1}{4}$.

What then were the items of which this income was composed? Beside his pension and his grant of wine, he had also the grant of a house near the Royal Manor House at Woodstock. Taking the rent of the house a man lives in at the tenth part of his income, Chaucer's house at Woodstock may be estimated, in modern denominations of money, at the value of £. 100 *per annum*. This with his annuity at £. 240, and his grant of wine at £. 180 *per annum*, constitutes a revenue of £. 520. It is also not unfrequent for the grant of a house to be accompanied by certain other perquisites, tending to assist the holder in his means of subsistence. Still however there will remain

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His paternal inheritance.

considerable resources to be supplied, to raise Chaucer's income to the amount above specified. These, as was hinted on a former occasion [a], may most obviously be supplied by the supposition that Chaucer inherited a paternal fortune adequate to the ordinary purposes of subsistence. Nine years elapsed between the time when we know that Chaucer occupied the house granted him by his sovereign on the verge of Woodstock Park, and the date of his first pension: and we must perceive it to be impossible that Chaucer should have tenanted a house, which we have found equal in accommodations to a modern house of the rent of £. 100 *per annum*, at a time when he was destitute in other respects of the necessaries of life.

Thus, by a collation of circumstances, we seem to have arrived at a reasonable basis of inference respecting the external situation of Chaucer, and the figure, as to opulence and rank, which he made in the eyes of his contemporaries: and the conclusion is that, from the thirtieth year of his age at latest, his situation was that of a certain degree of competence and ease, while, by the munificence of his sovereign, and the attachment and affection of John of Gaunt, he continually rose, as we shall have further occasion to observe in the sequel, to a still higher degree of opulence.

His moral and social habits.

Another inference not less important to the illustration of the life of Chaucer, is supplied to us by the grant of a pitcher of wine daily, which we are here discussing. We

[a] Vol. I, Chap. XIX, p. 392.

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may reasonably expect to derive some light from it upon the moral habits and social character of the receiver. When we meet with a grant of ten tuns of wine *per annum* to a nun, this is to be considered abstractedly only, as property to a certain amount. But the case of the grant to Chaucer is not similar. The man who receives what we should now call four bottles of wine a day from the king's cellar, may fairly be considered as a consumer of wine to that amount. If it had not been intended for actual consumption, it would have been given under a different form. Chaucer therefore, it appears, was a man of a gay and convivial temper, who, it may be presumed, seldom sat down to the principal refreshment of the day, without the society of two or three chosen friends, whose manners and topics of conversation were congenial to his own. To Chaucer's table then we may with sufficient propriety apply the verses in which Beaumont has celebrated the convivial meetings he had been accustomed to hold with Shakespear, Fletcher and Jonson.

His temper gay and convivial.

What things have we seen
Done at the Mermaid! heard words, that have been
So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,
As if that every one from whence they came,
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,
And had resolv'd to live a fool the rest
Of his dull life; then when there hath been thrown
Wit, able' enough to justify the town
For three days past, wit, that might warrant be
For the whole city to talk foolishly
Till that were cancell'd; and, when that was gone,
We left an air behind us which alone

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Was able' to make the two next companies
Right witty; though but downright fools, mere wise.

VERSES OF BEAUMONT TO JONSON, annexed to the Comedy of the Nice Valour or the Passionate Madman.

inclined to expence.

A further inference as to the moral habits of Chaucer, which may be collected with sufficient evidence from the documents here referred to, and others which will hereafter be produced, is that he was, with respect to his domestic economy, a man of expensive habits, and not unfrequently exposed to pecuniary embarrassment. Chaucer appears to have loved travelling, to have loved society, and to have loved to see himself surrounded with gay, good-humoured and warm-hearted friends. We may reasonably believe that his society was select. On a former occasion we entered into a review of the character and history of two of his most intimate companions[b], and these may well be received as a specimen of the rest. Chaucer was by no means deficient in all the refinement that the age in which he lived could afford; he was a courtier, a gentleman, and a man versed in literature, taste and the fine arts. But, within these limits, he delighted to unbend himself, and to enjoy all those relaxations and amusements which to the delicate mind inspire additional zest, in consequence of the canons of criticism and good sense to which they are subjected. The bent of his mind in this respect is sufficiently visible in his works, par-

and to pleasurable indulgences.

[b] Vol. I, Chap. XVII.

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ticularly in the work of his maturest years, the Canterbury Tales; where it is usually, and perhaps justly, remarked that the parts which are tinctured with a certain degree of broad and salacious humour, such as the Milleres Tale and the Reves Tale, together with the Wif of Bathes Prologue, are inferior to nothing in the collection. The coarseness which we may be inclined to impute to these productions, is ascribable to the poet's age, and not to the poet. In a word, Chaucer was an individual little disposed to monastic austerities; and, though he certainly never wallowed in the mire of sensuality, or forfeited his consequence with his compatriots by dishonourable indulgences, yet he had senses and faculties qualifying him to enjoy all the temperate pleasures of existence, and he was not of a character to refuse himself any gratifications which an enlightened and unfettered judgment might approve.

Habitually a courtier.

We have already seen great reason to believe that Chaucer inherited by birth a moderate competence. If therefore he had not been decisively of a pleasurable turn, if he had not been a man somewhat too little inclined to deny himself those pleasures which were not exactly within the limits of his personal means, he would probably never have been a courtier, or at least not a courtier in that eminent degree in which we find him to have been such.

His introduction into public life.

By this principle his public history is easily and naturally explained. Whether Edward III. or his queen Philippa were the first spontaneously to recognise the splendour of his talents, or this circumstance were pointed out to them by another, it is impossible for us to pronounce. But we may easily perceive that his first coming to court was in the character of a man of unparalleled endowments, of

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His successive promotions.

great worth, and of a frank and noble temper, somewhat too much fettered and narrowed in his circumstances; and as such, a person peculiarly proper to be chosen as an object of royal munificence. The king accordingly placed him about the person of a favourite son, invited him to attend upon the hours of royal recreation, and gave him a house within sight of one of his most favourite retreats. Two years after, he led Chaucer with him to the field in an invasion of France, and probably gave him an honourable post in the armies of his country. The next favour Chaucer received from his sovereign was the pension, the value of which has been formerly discussed. He was afterward employed upon a secret mission to the continent; and, a year or two subsequently to this, appointed in a public character one of the English envoys to the republic of Genoa. In addition to these distinctions, he received in the present year a grant of a pitcher of wine daily, to be delivered to him during the term of his life by the hands of the king's principal butler.

Is appointed comptroller of the customs.

Still however Chaucer's fortune was not equal to the openness and liberality of his disposition. In about six weeks after the grant of wine above mentioned, he received a much more considerable mark of the royal bounty, in the appointment of comptroller of the duties of customs in the port of London[c].

What was the value of this office it is not easy precisely to ascertain. It may be considered in two points of view; as to the salary annexed to the appointment, and the

[c] Appendix, No.

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degree of consideration ordinarily yielded to the person who held it.

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From an inspection of the official rolls in which the patent grants of the kings of England in these times are recorded, it appears that there were two contemporary officers to whom the superintendence of the duties of customs was principally confided: these are, the clerk, and the comptroller. The superintendence of the king's works was in like manner intrusted to two persons with similar denominations. By an examination of these grants it will be found that the comptroller in each of these departments officiated as treasurer, or, more accurately speaking, that it was on his *visum* and attestation that the accounts of the clerk were settled. Proceeding upon these premises, it has been suggested to me by persons versed in affairs of this nature, that the comptroller was the principal officer, and that the emoluments of his place may reasonably be concluded to have been the greatest of the two.

Salary annexed to it.

Chaucer, in consequence of the intrigues and convulsions of the reign of Richard II, forfeited his office of comptroller of the customs; and, when, some years after, he was restored to favour, he received in lieu of it the appointment of clerk of the king's works[d]. It has been conceived, and we shall see strong reasons to confirm this opinion hereafter, that the emoluments of the latter of these offices were not equal to the emoluments of the former. Chaucer's salary as clerk of the works is stated in the patent of his appointment to have been two shillings *per diem*[d]; that

[d] Appendix, No.

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is, £. 36 : 10 : — *per annum*, or, in denominations of modern money, a yearly income of six hundred and fifty-seven pounds. If then we suppose his revenue, independently of this office, to have been equivalent to one thousand pounds *per annum* of modern money, we shall see sufficient reason to consider Chaucer as placed at this time in a situation of comparative opulence and splendour.

Nature of its business.

We have formerly referred to Mr. Tyrwhit's comment upon Chaucer's grant of the patent office of comptroller of the customs [e]. This critic infers, from the circumstance of Chaucer being required to keep the accounts of his office with his own hand, that Edward III. "was either totally insensible of his poetical talents, or at least had no mind to encourage him in the cultivation or exercise of them."

This inference has already been repelled in the place where we first had occasion to mention it. Another answer arises, now that we are brought to the fact in the ordinary course of our narrative. Edward III. or his queen paid an honourable homage to the splendour of Chaucer's poetical talent in the year 1358 or earlier, when he received from them the donation of a house at Woodstock. It would indeed be harsh reasoning, if what the king did in kindness to Chaucer sixteen years afterward, should forfeit the fair reputation and equitable construction of what he had previously done in the full vigour and maturity of his judgment.

Chaucer owes this appointment to the king of Castille.

But let us further recollect at what period it was that Chaucer obtained the office of comptroller of the customs:—

[e] Vol. I, Chap. XIX, p. 387.

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just three years before the death of Edward III, at a time when the king had almost entirely withdrawn himself from the cares of state, when the political power of Chaucer's friend, John of Gaunt, was nearly absolute, and when accordingly no year passed without Chaucer receiving from the government one or more substantial marks of the favour with which he was regarded. Mr. Tyrwhit therefore should have transferred the charge of insensibility to Chaucer's genius, from Edward III, to this illustrious prince, whose confidence in Chaucer was unlimited, and whose friendship for him was unalterable. The commentator certainly might have spared his subtle refinements upon the exalted talent of patronage, as well as the apposite quotation from Milton which he adduces to show, that, though Edward III. were deaf to all the witcheries of poetry, he was himself endowed with a true discernment of its beauties [f].

Motives of the donation.

It is easy to account for Chaucer being appointed to the place of comptroller of the customs; an office, the business of which he not equivocally insinuates was little agreeable to his disposition [g]. Chaucer aspired to a generous style of living and a liberal income. His patron felt the sincerest inclination to meet his wishes in this respect. Yet he scrupled to provide for him under the direct form of an ample pension. Though John of Gaunt, and a few persons touched with the love of literature and

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[f] The quotation is from the Mansus:

Neque enim, nisi charus ab ortu
Dîs superis, poterit magno favisse poetæ.
ver. 72.

[g] House of Fame, Book II, ver. 144.

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the muses, knew what was the honour due to a poet, the bulk of the British nobles of this period cannot be supposed to have entered into these feelings. Nor were the old English barons endowed in a high degree with a pliant spirit, or much accustomed to suppress the comments which public measures excited in their minds. They would have murmured, and loudly, if they had seen a plebeian, who was drawn from the haunts of trade, maintained, in what they would have called idleness, with an income equal to that of many of the high-born peers of the realm. Every one knows the style in which they addressed their sovereign in the reigns of Henry III, Edward II. and Richard II. John of Gaunt had a delicate part to perform amidst an aristocracy of this sort; and he was not inexperienced enough to imagine that he had nothing to consult in affairs of government but his own inclination.

Chaucer's ministerial character.

There is a further reason why John of Gaunt might naturally desire that Chaucer should hold an official situation. It was not his habit to play the idle part of a patron; he rather wished to place the talents he loved, in active employments. This is sufficiently apparent in the case of Wicliffe. He probably held to Chaucer a language something like this: "You are in the full vigour of your age and constitution. That this vigour should be employed in the service of your country, will be equally advantageous to you and to me. The reins of the English government are confided to my hands; I ought not to withdraw myself from this responsibility, if I desired it. I want your advice; I want the assistance of your talents. I shall often feel prompted to consult your admirable judgment, the

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rectitude of your views, and your knowledge of the world and of the human heart; and it is more frank and manly that the man whose counsels I pursue should fill an ostensible office, than that he should be my adviser secret and unavowed. You owe yourself to your country and your friend; and I require this at your hands. On the other side, if you desire poetical fame, your compliance with my wishes will assist your attainment of that object. Man is a complex being, and is affected with mixed considerations; and your contemporaries will listen with far different feelings to your beautiful and elevated productions if they flow from an ambassador and a minister of state, than if you remained obscurely sheltered under your natal roof in the city in which you were born, or sequestered among the groves and streams which adorn your neighbourhood at Woodstock."

His domestic,

There was yet another reason why Chaucer might desire wealth and a situation calculated to excite the respect of the world. He had been for some time married, and was now pretty certainly a father: Thomas Chaucer, speaker of the house of commons in the second year of Henry IV, must by this time have been born. In his person his illustrious father raised a family; and it is but fair to infer that what he actually did, he previously intended to do. From this time therefore we are to consider Chaucer in a new point of view. His situation was no longer a doubtful one. He no longer, in the contemptuous phraseology of Dr. Johnson [h], "hung loose upon society." He appeared

[h] Lives of the Poets: Pope.

in two ways under a character which mankind are prone to regard with a certain degree of esteem. He was the reputable master of a family, embracing within its limits the principal of those natural charities which have so mysterious and irresistible a power over the human heart. And he was a man in office and authority, whom many approached as solicitors, the equity of whose decisions many waited with anxiety, and who might expect, accordingly as he should conduct himself, to be pursued with curses, or looked up to with thoughts of gratitude and blessing, by multitudes.

and official situation.

Supposed grant of the year 1371.

Beside the grants to Chaucer already enumerated, a question has also arisen of another. This is mentioned in the Life prefixed to Urry's edition in these terms: "Not long after [the pension of 1367], we find him gentleman of the king's privy chamber, and by that title the king granted to him by letters patents dated in the forty-fifth year of his reign, the further sum of twenty marks *per annum* during life." Mr. Tyrwhit, speaking of the same particular, says, "Mr. Speght, who omits this grant [the pension of 1367], mentions one of the same purport in the 45 E. III. in which Chaucer is styled *Valettus Hospitii*, which he translates—*Grome of the Pallace*[1]."

It is curious to trace the ebbs and flows of veracity in different authors, treating of subjects of this sort. The biographer, coadjutor of Urry, states, as we see, the assertion of Chaucer receiving from Edward III. a second grant of twenty marks *per annum* during life, in the most

[1] Preface, Appendix C, note d.

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direct and unqualified manner; leaving his readers to discover as they can, whether his assertion be founded in official records, or in the personal effrontery of the writer. Mr. Tyrwhit, though equally erroneous in his statement, has furnished a clue enabling us to detect the misrepresentation both of him and of his predecessor.

Biographia Britannica.

But the most remarkable way in which this supposed fact of a second pension is represented, is in the article of Chaucer in the Biographia Britannica. The writer of this article copies *verbatim* the sentence above quoted from Urry's coadjutor. He does not however stop here. He inserts in his margin a reference to substantiate his assertion, in this form, "45 Ed. III. p. 3. m. 7;" established abbreviations, which, put into words at length, signify "Patent Rolls of the forty-fifth year of Edward III, part (or roll) the third, membrane (or skin) the seventh." Thus he boldly cites the highest authority which can be exhibited in a matter of this sort, to confirm his assertion.

Its forgeries.

How then does the fact itself stand? The patent rolls of the forty-fifth year of Edward III. are two only; there is no third part. That I might completely establish or refute the statement of the Biographia, I imposed upon myself the unnecessary task of looking through the patents of that year. There is, as might easily have been conceived, no such patent. The whole reference is of that sort which is best known by the appellation of "a fabrication of history." And this in a work, which purports to be a monument of our national literature. It is so printed in the edition of 1748. It so stands without change or examination in the edition of 1784. We shall have several further occasions to animadvert upon

the forgeries which occur in the article of Chaucer in the Biographia Britannica.

Source from which they sprung.

We are thus reduced to the single authority of Mr. Speght, upon which it is easy to perceive that the statements of the coadjutor of Urry, of Mr. Tyrwhit, and of the Biographia, are entirely founded. Now Mr. Speght's reference is to the *Pellis Exitus Scaccarii* of 45 E. III[k]; and, as he takes no notice of, and had never seen, the patent grant of 1367, it is not difficult for a careless reader, after the patent of 1367 had been brought to light, to regard the statement of Mr. Speght as referring to a second grant to the same amount, four years subsequent to the former. But what is the fact? The *Pellis Exitus Scaccarii* is "a skin recording the issues of the exchequer;" and therefore the reference of Mr. Speght is not, as he hastily styles it, to a grant of 45 E. III, but to Chaucer's receipt in that year for a payment of money on a grant previously existing. A similar receipt we shall have occasion to produce in another place. The statement of Mr. Speght therefore, when duly examined, affords not the slightest foundation to the idea of a second pension granted to Chaucer, in the year 1371.

There is however one thing remarkable in the record produced by Mr. Speght, and that is the addition by which Chaucer is designated, *Valettus Hospitii*. This term can scarcely be construed as meaning less, than that the poet actually possessed an appointment of some kind, not yet traced in the records, in the royal houshold.

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[k] Speght's Edition: Life of Chaucer; his rewards.

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OUTLINE OF CHAUCER'S POEM OF THE HOUSE OF FAME.

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WHILE Chaucer held the office of comptroller of the customs, he wrote his poem entitled the House of Fame. This is inferred by Mr. Tyrwhit with sufficient probability from a passage in the poem which seems to have an allusion to his official employments, and which we shall presently have occasion to quote.

Its general merits.

The House of Fame is a Dream; a species of composition which continually presents itself to our observation, among the productions of the thirteenth and following centuries. It is full of imagination; a beauty congenial to, and not to be dispensed with in, a performance of this class. It abounds in passages of a philosophical cast, as might well be expected from a mind like Chaucer's, in the full maturity of its faculties. And it is interspersed, like the poem of William de Lorris and John de Meun, with traits of human nature and strokes of humour, excellences not most obviously to be looked for in a composition the subject of which is supernatural.

Prologue.

In a sort of prologue to his poem, Chaucer enumerates, with a singular fertility of invention, all the different

hypotheses that may be framed, and solutions that may be assigned, concerning the cause of the phenomenon of dreams. He then proceeds to observe that

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—— never,[a] sithen I was borne,
Ne no man [b] ellés me beforne,
[c] Metten, I trowé stedfastly,
So wonderfull a dreme as I.

ver. 59.

The period of this dream Chaucer has assigned to the tenth of December; and he invokes the God of Sleep to assist him to tell his dream aright. This introductory portion of the work concludes with a prayer that every favourable event may attend upon those of his readers,

That taketh well, and scorneth nought,
Ne it misdemen in [d] her thought;

ver. 91.

Chaucer's sensibility to criticism.

while on the contrary the author wishes to them who shall misdeem of his production, that every harm they dream of by night or by day may overtake them, "with soche conclusion" as Croesus king of Lydia experienced, who (according to Chaucer) perished on a gibbet, in conformity to a vision which had predicted to him that such should be his fate. It is not probable that Chaucer would have stained his page with what he truly calls so [e] uncharitable a

[a] since. [b] else. [c] Dreamed. [d] their. [e] ver. 108.

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wish, if his productions had not been exposed to censure and criticism, and if he had not been unduly sensible to what carpers and cavillers alleged against them. It is a matter of some curiosity for us to figure to ourselves the sort of animadversions and mockeries with which the *beaux esprits* of the fourteenth century affected to amuse and instruct their gaping audiences; and we are bound to recollect that, though reviewers and journalists are the spawn of a more recent period, yet Homer had his Zoilus, Virgil his Bavius, and Chaucer his nameless adversary, whose censures, as we are taught on this occasion, he could not hear without some diminution of his Christian charity.

Book I.

Temple of Venus.

adorned with paintings from the Æneid.

The first book of the House of Fame entirely consists of a description of an imaginary Temple of Venus, made of glass, and adorned on every side with " portraitures," the subjects of which are drawn from the Æneid of Virgil. Ovid, Claudian and Dante are spoken of in the course of the description, but the honour of having his stories chosen for delineations to adorn the Temple is exclusively reserved for the Mantuan bard. Having viewed these portraitures, the author is seized with a desire to examine into the site of this extraordinary edifice, which appeared to be finished in a very exquisite style, but in which he perceived no vestige of any living inhabitant.

When I out of the doré cam,
I faste abouten me behelde:
Then sawe I but a largé felde,
As farre as ever I might se,
Withouten toune, or house, or tre,

Or bushe, or grasse, or [f] ered lande;
For all the felde was but of sande,
As smal as men maye se at eye
In the desertés of Lybye;
Ne ferther no maner creture,
That is yformėd by nature,
Ne sawe I me to [g] rede or wisse.

ver. 480.

Astonished at this uninterrupted and extensive solitude, Chaucer exclaims,

O Christ, thought I, that art in blisse,
From fanton and illusion
Me save! and with devocyon
Mine eyén to the heven I caste.

ver. 492.

In this attitude he discovers an eagle of colossal size, soaring "fast by the sun."

It was of golde, and shone so bright
That never sawe men soche a sight;
[h] But yf the heven had ywonne
Al newe of God another sonne,
So shone the egles fethers bright:
And somwhat downwarde gan it light.

ver. 503.

This extraordinary creature in his flight discovers

---

[f] eared, arable. [g] counsel or instruct. [h] *But yf*, Unless.

CHAP. XXXVII.

Journey of Chaucer to the House of Fame.

Chaucer; and, immediately pouncing upon him, bears him away in his talons, and carries him along through the regions of the air. The poet is at first stupified with terror; but, being encouraged by his conductor, who addresses him with articulate sounds,

> Right in the samé voice and [i] steven
> That useth one that I can [k] neven,
> For it [l] was godely saide to me
> So as it ever wonte to be,
>
> ver. *53*.

he begins to consider with himself, whether it were Jupiter's intention, whose messenger the eagle is of course supposed to be, to make him a star, or to remove him, as Ganymede and Romulus were removed, from earth, and introduce him into the convocation of the Gods. The eagle however, who understands his thoughts, tells him that he is commissioned with no such purpose, though his object is friendly; but that Jupiter, having taken into consideration the constancy of his services to Cupid and Venus

> To maken bokes, songes and ditees,
>
> ver. 114.

and the little extent of his knowledge respecting men and their affairs, had determined to reward his virtue, and enlighten his understanding, by permitting him to visit

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[i] speech. [k] name. [l] addressed to me kindly.

CHAP. XXXVII.

His principles of philosophy.

the House of Fame. The eagle then enters into a philosophical disquisition, intended to instruct Chaucer in the principle to which the House of Fame is indebted for its existence. He tells the poet, that every thing in nature tends to its stead or place, where it may best be preserved, and obtain the most prosperous and suitable being; as stones tend to the earth, as rivers to the sea, as fishes have their healthful condition in the water, and trees strike out and spread their roots beneath the ground. So sound, adds he, naturally diffuses itself, and mounts. To render this more obvious to the poet's apprehension, his guide makes use of the simile of the pebble in the lake, which produces a larger and a larger circle, till the last reaches on every side the confining shores; nor does the commotion which is generated rest only upon the surface, but the water is equally moved to its lowest bed, though we do not see it, in like manner as sound is propagated in every direction. Nor is this all:

> that same kindly stede ywis
> That every thinge enclin'd to is,
> Yhath also his [m] kyndelyche stede;
>
> ver. 319.

and in this manner every sound that ascends into the air, has a further tendency, when mounted, to repair to the House of Fame, which is seated equally distant from the heaven, the earth and sea.

He sees in his flight the earth,

While the eagle is thus engaged in unfolding the principles of nature, he proceeds in his flight. Chaucer

---

[m] kindly.

CHAP. XXXVII.

beholds from on high the fields, the plains and the mountains, the forests and some of their more terrible inhabitants, the giant-trees the fathers of the wood, the cities,

the meteors,

the rivers, and the ships sailing on the bosom of the ocean. He afterward passes through the region of meteors, amidst

> Cloudés, mistés and tempestés,
> Snowés and hailes and raines and windes,
> And the engendringe in [a] her kindes.
>
> ver. 458.

and the constellations.

At length he arrives at the monsters of the celestial sphere and of the zodiac. The hint of this part of Chaucer's description is taken from the journey of Phaeton in the Metamorphoses. He ascends higher than Alexander or Scipio had ever done in their dreams, or Icarus in fable.

His arrival.

In fine he reaches the spot toward which his journey was directed, and is informed by his conductor, in answer to his enquiries, that in all this house which is before him there does not exist one living being; but that it is peopled with shadows, since every speech that arrives there, has no sooner come, than it assumes the shape, and appears in the exact likeness, of the person who spoke it,

> Be he clothed in red or blake,
> [o] Wher man or woman, he or she.
>
> ver. 570.

---

[a] their. [o] Whether.

Book III.

Castle of Fame erected upon a rock of ice.

The poet and his conductor now separate; and Chaucer advances toward the castle or palace from which his production derives its name. It is placed upon a lofty rock, which he climbs with much difficulty. The surface of the rock shines more clear than polished glass, and the traveller is for some time in doubt as to the species of matter of which the rock is composed. He finds however at last, that it is

> A roche of yse, and not of stele,
>
> ver. 40.

and expresses his surprise at discovering so splendid an edifice placed upon so frail a foundation. The rock is engraved on all sides with the names of persons who at different periods had enjoyed a high reputation; but in most parts the surface is thawed, and the names are difficult to read, one or more letters having disappeared from each. On one side however, where the rock is sheltered by the shadow of the castle, the writing is

> As freshe, as men had written [p]hem there
> The self daie, or that verry houre,
> That I on hem began to [q] poure.
>
> ver. 66.

As soon as Chaucer had reached the castle, he discovers that it is constructed of one perfect beryl, " withouten

---

[p] them: the names.

[q] pore.

CHAP. XXXVII.

peces or joynynges." The style of building is magnificent and full of ornament,

Outside of the castle.

As barbicans and pinnacles,
Imag'ries and tabernacles,

ver. 99.

together with windows as multitudinous as flakes in a snow-storm. In each of the pinnacles are niches, where stand minstrels, relaters of gests, trumpeters and professors of martial music,

And all that longeth unto fame;

ver. 110.

as well as jogelours, magicians, tragetours, sorceresses and witches, and all such persons as by supernatural or necromantic art secure to themselves an ignominious notoriety.

Its internal architecture and appearance.

All this is on the outside of the castle. Chaucer, after having surveyed the building, enters at the gate; and, as he is entering, meets a multitude of heralds and pursuivants issuing forth, busily engaged in proclaiming the praises of the Goddess, and of her rich and opulent suitors. The description of the divinity of the place, who is seated above a [r] dais, upon an imperial chair carved of dazzling carbuncle, is taken from Virgil and Ovid. She is full of eyes, of ears and of tongues; she has wings on her feet; and, though at first she seems only a cubit in

[r] An elevated floor, usually placed at the upper end of an apartment of state. See Vol. I, Chap. VIII, p. 158.

height, she presently after appears with her feet touching the earth, and her head among the stars.

> But, Lord! the [a] perrie' and the richesse
> I sawe sittyng on the Goddesse;
> And the hevénly melodie
> Of songés full of armonie
> I herde about her trone [t] isong,
> That all the palais wall [u] yrong!
> So songe the mightie msué, she
> That cleped is Caliope,
> And her seven [x] susterné eke,
> That in [y] her faces semen meke,
> And evermore eternally
> Thei song of Fame.
>
> ver. 303.

Worthies whose images occupy the castle.

From the dais, upon which the Goddess is seated, to the door, there is a numerous range of pillars of different kinds of metals, and each of these pillars is surmounted by the images of various historians and writers of gests and adventures. There is some obscurity in this part of the poem to the reader who should endeavour to draw out to his fancy the objects described. The hall itself has the same faculty as the deity who inhabits it, being by degrees enlarged to a thousand times the dimensions that it occupied when Chaucer first surveyed it. Of one of the pillars the author expressly remarks, and by parity of reason it would seem that this observation might be ex-

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[a] precious stones. [t] sung. [u] rung. [x] sisters. [y] their.

CHAP. XXXVII. tended to the rest, that it was as "hie as he might se." Fame herself sustains upon her shoulders

> Bothé the armés and the name
> Of [a] tho that hadden largé fame;
>
> ver. 321.

such as Alexander and Hercules. This seems to mean that her robe was adorned with their name and blazonry. Many of the pillars sustain several figures each: of course the figures must be supposed to be small, and, where the capital is as "hie as he might se," the groups would be barely discernible. The same expression is again applied to the historians as had before been applied to the Goddess, that they bear upon their shoulders the fame of the countries whose annals they recorded; and this, if it was attended with any definite idea in the poet's mind, must of course be interpreted to mean that they had garments in like manner embroidered with names and blazonry. Upon the first pillar are placed eight historians of the Jews; but one only of these, Josephus, has a name in Chaucer. The second supports the single figure of Statius, the preserver of the fame of Thebes. The third is surmounted by six figures, each "busie for to bere up Troye:" these are Homer, Dares, Titus [Dictys] [a], Lollius [b], Guido dalla Colonna and Geoffrey of Monmouth.

---

[a] those.

[a] Warton, on what authority I know not, has changed this name into Livy. Tyrwhit writes it Ditus: See his Glossary.

[b] Considering that the stories of Troilus and Creseide, and of Palamon and Arcite, were both translated by Boccaccio and by Chaucer; that the original

The next two pillars sustain the single figures of Virgil and Ovid. The sixth supports Lucan, and CHAP. XXXVII.

> all these clerkes,
> That write of Romés mightie werkes:
>
> ver. 413.

and the seventh Claudian. Warton [c] supposes that a species of censure is designed in placing Lucan among the Roman historians, according to the decision of Quintilian, that he is *oratoribus magis quam poetis annumerandus.* But this is without foundation. In the times in which Chaucer lived, every relater of [d] gests was looked to rather for facts than fiction, and considered as a reporter of valuable information, before he was rated by his merits as a poet. Beside these seven pillars in the House of Fame, there were innumerable others; so that

> The hall was allé full iwis
> Of hem that written old [d] jestés,
> As ben on treés rokes nestés:
>
> ver. 424.

and Chaucer seems to decline entering into further par-

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author of the latter is wholly unknown; that they were the work of the same age; and that Lollius is placed so familiarly by Chaucer upon a footing with the greatest writers; it is not very improbable that they were both the production of this author, and that Chaucer translated the one and the other from the Latin in which he had composed them.

[c] Vol. I, Sect. xiv.

[d] *Gesta,* memorable actions.

CHAP. XXXVII.

ticulars, rather from the inexhaustibleness of the subject, than from a conception that those whom he had named are of a class more worthy than those he passes in general terms.

Petitioners in the House of Fame.

Having described the structure of the castle, and whatever it contains of inanimate, we come next to the suitors who address themselves to the Goddess, and intreat to obtain of her a boon. In this part of the work Chaucer has displayed considerable humour. Fame is ingeniously feigned by him to be the sister of Fortune, and not less capricious in her frowns and her smiles; the poet hereby insinuating that the firm and noble mind will look with no less indifference upon the decrees of the one than upon those of the other.

Their varying success.

And some of hem she graunted sone,
And some she [e] warned well and faire,
And some she graunted the contraire
Of [f] her askyng all utterlie:
But this I say you truélie,
What that [g] her grace was I [h] ne wist;
For of these folke full well I wist,
Thei had gode fame [i] eche deserved
Although thei were diversely served.

ver. 448.

Æolus and his trumpets.

When the Goddess begins to attend to the petitions submitted to her, she dispatches a messenger to summon to her aid Æolus God of the Winds, who immediately pre-

---

[e] refused with smooth and gentle speech. [f] their.
[g] *her grace* seems here to denote *her rule of decision.*
[h] could not divine. [i] *forte* alike.

sents himself with his two trumpets, of "clere laude" and of "sclaunder;" the former made of gold, CHAP. XXXVII.

And certes all the breth, that went
Out of this trumpés mouthé, smelde
As men a pot full of baume helde
Emong a basket full of roses;

ver. 594.

the other made of brass, its colour the deepest black, and issuing from its mouth, when blown upon, a smoke

Blacke, blue and grenishe, swartishe, rede,
And it stanke as the pitte of hell.

ver. 557.

The first company of petitioners implore to obtain the fame which they have deserved by their worthy deeds, but the Goddess refuses to employ Æolus respecting them, and dismisses them without a decision. The second company prefer a similar petition, but with a more unfortunate issue.

And thou, Dan Æolus, quod she,
Take forthe thy trompe anone, let se,
That is icleped Sclaunder light,
And blowe [k] her loos, that every wight
Speke of hem harme and shreuédnesse
In stede of gode and worthinesse,

---

[k] *her loos*; their fame.

CHAP. XXXVII.

For thou shalt trumpe all the contraire
Of that thei have doen well and faire.

ver. 533.

The third company, whose case is the same, obtain a praise beyond their deserts. The fourth band of suitors,

But certaine thei were [l] wonder fewe,
—— said, Certes, ladie bright,
We have doen well with all our might,
But we ne [m] kepe to haven fame,
[n] Hideth our workés and our name.

ver. 601.

The capricious deity yields to their demand; but, another set preferring the same request, she reproaches them with indignation for the contempt with which they regard her, and orders their worth to be instantly proclaimed so loud, that all the world may resound with it. The two following companies consist of empty coxcombs who desire to have a lying reputation of women's favours; and, as in the preceding instance, the first are successful, and the second, being refused, are given up to universal mockery and contempt. Two more bands of petitioners close the procession: these are wicked men: the former intreat to be renowned for all the virtues which they have not, and are refused; the latter pray to be universally spoken of for their dishonest and atrocious acts, and obtain their request: the spokesman of this band is

[l] wondrous. [m] desire. [n] Hide, *imperative*.

Erostratus, who set fire to the temple of Diana at Ephesus [Chaucer says, by mistake, of Isis at Athens], that by so doing he might live to eternal abhorrence, to baffle which monstrous desire the magistrates of the city passed a law, declaring it criminal to mention his name.

CHAP. XXXVII.

Chaucer's professed estimation of fame.

Chaucer having witnessed this scene, a stranger accosts him, enquiring what was his errand thither, and whether he also had come in pursuit of reputation.

Nay, [o] for sothe, frende, quod I,
I come nat hither, [p] graunt mercy,
For no soche causé, by my hed;
Sufficeth me, [q] as I were ded,
That no wight have my name in honde:
I wot my selfe best howe I [r] stonde:
For what I [s] drie, or what I thinke,
I wol my selfen al it drinke,
Certainly for the moré parte,
[t] As ferforth as I can mine arte.

ver. 783.

House of Tydinges.

Chaucer proceeds to complain to the stranger that he is disappointed; that he knew, before he came hither, that many men in many ways are desirous of fame; but that he had been led to expect to learn some new things, tidings (he knew not what)

Of love, or of soche thingés glade.

ver. 799.

[o] forsooth. [p] *grand' merci*, great thanks. [q] when I am dead. [r] stand. [s] suffer. [t] As far as I know my plan of life.

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On this intimation, the stranger conducts him out of the castle, to the House of Tydinges. This house is constructed entirely of twigs of various colours, and is shaped like a cage. It appears to be circular, and the diameter is sixty miles in length. The avenues to it are as numerous as leaves on trees, and the roof is pierced with a thousand holes to let the sounds escape. It has besides the quality of whirling about with a restless motion as swift as thought, so that Chaucer is at a loss how to effect his entrance. In this dilemma, he is unexpectedly relieved by his conductor the eagle, who once again takes him up in his talons, and carries him through a window into the hall. This apartment Chaucer finds so crowded that he has scarcely room to stand; and all the persons within are busily employed in repeating to each other tidings of war and peace, accord and strife, rest and travail, life and death, plenty and famine, prosperity and misfortune, fair weather and tempest, of marriages,

> Of gode and of misse government,
> Of fire, and divers accident,
>
> ver. 885.

eked out with inventions and prophecies, uttered sometimes in whisper and sometimes aloud, and confirmed with oaths. No sooner has one heard a thing, than he is eager to communicate it to another, " [a] Or it a forlonge way was olde;" and, every time it is repeated, something is

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[a] Ere.

added to the tale of the former relater. When any story is grown to a certain size, it instantly hastens to the world below; and Chaucer sometimes sees a truth and a lie struggling with each other for a passage, and no otherwise able to escape, than by forming an agreement, and promising that they will constantly travel together. From the House of Tydinges the different stories repair to the presence of Fame, who gives them names, and assigns them at pleasure a durable or a transitory existence. The frequenters of the House of Tydinges are shipmen, pilgrims, [x] pardoners, couriers and messengers, with boxes full of lies. Chaucer wanders up and down to amuse himself, and hears a tiding

> of some countre,
> That shall not nowe be tolde for me,
> For it no nede is—redyly
> Folke can [y] ysinge it bet than I;
> [z] For al mote out or late or rathe,
> Allé the shevés in the lathe.
>
> ver. 1045.

At length he observes every one running to a particular corner of the hall, shoving and elbowing each other, and even climbing upon each other's shoulders: this corner was appropriated to tidings of love.

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[x] A sort of travelling chapmen, who dealt in pardons, licences and indulgences from the pope.

[y] relate it better.

[z] For every thing must come to light late or early, as the barn (*lathe*) is gradually emptied of its sheaves.

CHAP. XXXVII.

Before Chaucer however has mixed in the crowd, his eye is suddenly caught with the figure of a man, which he feels unable to describe; and therefore contents himself with informing us, that his appearance was such as implied great dignity and authority. At sight of him the poet awakes from his dream. By this conclusion to his performance, he seems to intend an implied censure of himself, for writing, at his age, and with his serious occupations, upon so slight a subject, and wandering among the unsubstantial forms of allegory.

Chaucer's character of himself.

In the second book of the poem Chaucer enters into the developement, as he seems willingly to have done on other occasions, of certain features of his own character. The eagle tells him,

not onely fro ferre countre
No tidingés comen to the,
Not of thy very neighbourés
That dwellen almost at thy dorés
Thou herest neither that ne this;
For, when thy labour al done is,
And hast *made al thy reckeninges,*
In stede of reste and of newe thinges,
Thou goest home to thy house anone,
And al so dombe as any stone
Thou sittest at another boke,
Tyl fully [a] dased is thy loke,
And livest thus as an hermite;
Although thine abstinence is lite.

Book II, ver. 139.

[a] dimmed.

In this passage we have two principal features of Chaucer's character: his insatiable love of study; and, in the last line, his propensity to a free and generous style of living.

CHAP. XXXVII.

Writes under some oppression of mind.

Elsewhere he alludes to some calamity with which he was at this time oppressed. The eagle observes to him,

> Jovés of his grace,
> As I have said, wil [b] the solace
> Finally with these [c] ilké thinges,
> [d] Uncouth sightés and tidinges,
> To passe away thine hevinesse;
> Soche [e] routhe hath he of thy distresse,
> That thou suffred'st debonairly,
> And [f] wost thy selven utterly
> Whole desperate of allé blisse,
> Sithe that fortune hath made [g] amisse
> The [h] sote of al thine hertés rest
> Languishe, and eke in point to [i] brest.
>
> Book III, ver. 917.

. . . .

This seems to allude to the dangerous illness of some person very dear to Chaucer, his wife or his child; and, if that be the true construction, affords additional evidence of the tenderness of his disposition.

Period at which the House of Fame was produced.

In other parts of the poem Chaucer speaks of himself, as he had done in his earlier works, as a stranger to the passion of love. It is that he may become more in-

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[b] thee. [c] same. [d] Unknown, strange.
[e] pity. [f] believedst. [g] injuriously.
[h] sweet. [i] burst, die.

CHAP. XXXVII. timately acquainted with the incidents of this passion, that Jove sends him upon this extraordinary voyage.

For that thou haste, so truély,
So long, served [k] ententifly
His blindé nephewe Cupido,
And fairé quene Venus also,
Withouten [l] guerdon ever yet,
And [m] nathéles hast set thy wit,
Although in thy hed ful [n] lite is,
To maken bokes, songes and ditees,
——— in reverence
Of Love ;———
And evermore of Love enditest,
In honour of him and praisinges,
And [o] in his folkés fortheringes,
And in [p] her mater al devisest,
And not him ne his folke despisest,
[q] Although thou maist go in the daunce
Of hem, that him lyst not avaunce :
. . . .
Wherefore, as Jove considereth this,
And [r] als, beausire, of other thinges,
That is, that thou haste no tidinges
Of Lovés folke,———

Book II, ver. 107.

From this, and other passages of the same nature, we might infer that this was one of Chaucer's juvenile pro-

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[k] earnestly. [l] reward. [m] nevertheless. [n] little.
[o] for the furthering of his votaries. [p] their.
[q] Although thou mightest number thyself in the party of them, by whom Cupid is despised.
[r] also, good sir.

ductions, were it not that in the verses previously quoted he alludes to his arithmetical occupation, and elsewhere expressly observes of himself, "For I am olde [s]." Chaucer also speaks of himself as poor [t], but the turn of the passage in which this insinuation occurs is so playful, that it may well be doubted whether the penury alluded to is any thing more than that of which men in easy, sometimes in opulent, circumstances allow themselves to complain.

The subject taken from some writer of the middle ages.

Mr. Warton has already remarked upon this poem, that the writer is once addressed by the eagle under the name of Geoffrey [u], and twice under that of Peter [x]; a circumstance strongly presumptive of the fact, that the House of Fame is in some degree a translation, and at the same time that it is less purely so than the Romaunt of the Rose, as might indeed well be inferred from some of the passages last extracted. There is however no reason to imagine, as Warton does, that it is taken from a Provençal poem. This commendation of the Provençals has perhaps been partly founded upon the superior happiness of their climate, and partly upon the applauses with which they are occasionally mentioned by Petrarca and Dante. The idea of their preeminent merit has been abundantly refuted by more recent enquiries. Add to which, whatever excellence antiquarian visionaries have sometimes attributed to them, we have no reason to believe that Chaucer was even acquainted with their language.

Its character.

It seems indeed that it may safely be pronounced of this

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[s] Book II, ver. 487. [t] Book III, ver. 259. [u] Book II, ver. 221.
[x] Book II, ver. 526; Book III, ver. 909.

CHAP. XXXVII. poem, that it has much in it of Chaucer. Till the original from which he borrowed the idea shall be discovered, it will be impossible to determine how much of the invention existed before, and how much was the growth of the mind of Chaucer. Perhaps he did in this case much as Shakespear has done, when, upon the tragedies of a Lear and a King John, vapid and spiritless in the extreme, which he found already written, he erected those noble flights of genius, which render his plays so called, each in its respective degree, the wonders of the world. The rock of ice upon which the castle is built, the philosophy of sound, the two trumpets of Æolus, the whirling motion of the House of Tydinges, and many other parts of the poem, are in the finest style of allegorical delineation. We may add, they are precisely in the style of Chaucer. They have that fresh and wholsome hue, and that muscular and elastic character, which are peculiarly the inheritance of great minds. No elaborateness, no artifice, no affectation. It is the signature of Chaucer's imagination, that he dwells in generals, and by a single happy trait sets fire to his reader's fancy, and conjures up in him the feeling and state of mind which would have been produced, had the reader been present to the objects of which his author treats. Spenser on the other hand, whom among the ancient ornaments of our country we cannot help always recollecting as the great counterpart of Chaucer, deals in minute and microscopic painting, and so finishes his representations, that the reader has nothing further to require, at the same time that he rather sees the object, than feels the emotion which the object should produce. It would be a great mistake, to suppose that there is more of ima-

gination in this, than in the grander and more audacious strokes of our elder poet.

Pope's Temple of Fame.

Pope's performance entitled the Temple of Fame, in spite of his affected intimation to his readers, that, though "the design is in a manner entirely altered, and the descriptions and most of the particular thoughts his own, yet he could not suffer it to be printed without acknowledging" his obligation to Chaucer, may afford, to a person unfamiliarised with the phraseology of the elder poet, a tolerably exact idea of the third book of the House of Fame, though stripped of much of the wild and impressive boldness of our venerable bard.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

WICLIFFE'S EMBASSY CONCLUDED.—HIS TENETS RESPECTING DOCTRINE AND DISCIPLINE.—VIEWS OF JOHN OF GAUNT IN HIS PATRONAGE OF WICLIFFE.—CHAUCER OBTAINS THE WARDSHIP OF EDMUND STAPELGATE.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

1374.

WICLIFFE, in his appointment of negotiator with the papal commissioners at Bruges, appears to have resided in that city occasionally at least for two years, from August 1374 to about August of the year 1376[a]. This must have been an important era in the life of our venerable reformer. He is said by his biographer[a] to have gained new lights as to the policy and maxims of the church of Rome, from his near intercourse with the envoys of Gregory XI; the bishop of Pampeluna, and the bishop of Senigaglia. But, during the period in which Wicliffe took up his abode in Bruges, this city further became the resort of some of the most distinguished characters in Europe. It was fixed upon for the scene of negotiation respecting the jarring interests of France and England; and, in the beginning of the year, the king of Castille arrived there as plenipotentiary from Edward III, having for his colleagues in this commission

1375. Resort of eminent characters to the city of Bruges.

[a] Lewis, Chap. III.

1375.

Simon Sudbury bishop of London, William earl of Salisbury son to the celebrated earl and countess of Salisbury who have repeatedly been mentioned, and others. The ambassadors on the part of France were the dukes of Anjou and Burgundy, brothers to Charles V; and the pope had, for his representatives, and mediators between the two contending powers, the archbishop of Ravenna in Italy, and the bishop of Carpentras in the territory of Avignon [b].

What were Wicliffe's qualifications as a man of business and of the world previously to this commission, we cannot exactly decide. But an individual of talents infinitely inferior to his must have learned much, in being a witness of what was passing at Bruges during his residence in that place. We may be certain that Wicliffe did not fail to speculate deeply, and draw many profound reflections from what he saw. The public character in which he had come to Bruges gave him familiar access to the exalted personages who resorted thither; and, among the representatives of the three greatest powers then existing in the world, he studied the mysteries of church and state after a very different manner from that which could have been supplied to him by books, or by his solitary rambles and meditations on the banks of the Isis.

Papal bulls in behalf of the church and clergy of England.

It is difficult exactly to trace the progress of the ecclesiastical negotiations at Bruges. There are six bulls of Gregory XI. of the date of September 1375, purporting to adjust, under so many different heads, the questions

[b] Rymer, Tom. VII, 49 Edw. 3, Feb. 20 & Jun. 27.

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which had been agitated respecting the church and clergy of England[c]; and it is natural to regard these edicts in some manner as the result of the consultations held at that place. The object of them is to establish those persons in their benefices in England who were in actual possession, any provisions or appointments of the sovereign pontiff notwithstanding; to annul those reservations of Urban V. which, having forbidden the ordinary authorities in England to nominate to vacant benefices and preferments, had never been so acted upon as for the court of Rome to have used the power reserved; to confirm those beneficed clergy in England whose titles the late pope had questioned, and remit to them the first-fruits which he had demanded; and to permit a jury of neighbours on the spot, to assess the requisite sums upon the revenues of those livings in England which were held by cardinals, in cases where the churches or other ecclesiastical buildings were falling to decay, and stood in need of being repaired.

Close of the negotiation.

This however was by no means the close of the ecclesiastical negotiation at Bruges. It appears from the Parliament Rolls of the years 1376 and 1377, that at the former of these periods the questions between the king and the pope were still under discussion, and that at the latter the pope had promised redress[d]. The conclusion of the affair is said to have been a mutual compromise, that the pope should employ no more reservations, and that the king should forbear from an appointment to benefices indis-

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[c] Rymer, 49 Edv. 3, Sep. 1.

[d] Cotton, 50 & 51 Edv. 3.

criminately of his own mere authority[e], as he had sometimes done in imitation perhaps of the papal usurpations in the same point.

Historians have in general agreed to represent the conclusion of the ecclesiastical congress at Bruges as unsatisfactory; and have even undertaken to account for this, by supposing that bishop Gilbert, the first person in the king's commission, was in some way bought off by the pope. They observe that he was translated to the see of e reford by a papal bull, September 12 in this year, and afterward by the same authority to the bishopric of St. Davids in 1389[f]. Whatever error might be committed in the negotiation, we may be certain that no part of it was imputed to Wicliffe. It was soon after his return that he is supposed to have received the valuable living of Lutterworth in the county of Leicester from the bounty of his friend, the king of Castille[f].

Progress of the opinions of Wicliffe.

To this date it has been usual to refer the lectures and discourses of Wicliffe in which he combated and exposed the whole system of the Romish hierarchy. The date is certainly, in some respects at least, too late. The great ascendancy which we shall perceive his opinions to have gained in the parliament of the following year, forbids us to believe that their first disclosure was delayed so long. A critical study of his works yet remaining, chiefly in manuscript, would perhaps enable the ecclesiastical historian to determine what part of his warfare against the

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[e] Walsingham, A. D. 1374. Cotton, 1 Ric. 2. [f] Lewis, Chap. III.

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court of Rome had preceded his official concern in the congress at Bruges, and by how long a time, and what part of it was subsequent to that event.

Champions of the reform of the church previously to this period.

Various causes have already led us into a discussion of the attacks made upon the policy of Rome by St. Amour, Fitzralph archbishop of Armagh, and Grossteste, who may be considered as the precursors of Wicliffe. Their onsets were by no means deficient in courage and spirit, but they were chiefly confined to two points[s]:—the institution and conduct of the orders of mendicants; and the incroachments of the pope, by which he often superseded the ecclesiastical constitution of each particular country, and disposed of benefices and dignities throughout Christendom at his pleasure. In the commencement of his public life, and for several following years, Wicliffe had merely trod in their steps, and discoursed upon their topics.

Satires against its abuses.

Previously to Wicliffe, the satirists and poets had also descanted with great freedom upon the corrupt views and scandalous lives of the Romish clergy. This was a favourite theme of the tale-writers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. We have had a specimen of the style in which the poets of these ages treated ecclesiastical subjects, in our review of the Romance of the Rose; and few readers are ignorant of the ridicule with which the vices of the monks and friars are exposed by Boccaccio in the Decamerone. The dispute of the Guelphs and Ghibbelines concerning the respective limits of civil and eccle-

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[s] See Vol. I, Chap. X: Vol. II, Chap. XXV, and XXXII.

siastical authority, had led men in a certain degree to hold up the torch of truth to the usurpations of the church; and this dispute has been consecrated to immortality by the sublime pen of Dante.

But the court of Rome was not speedily alarmed at these freedoms. She reposed with a generous confidence upon the folly and blindness of mankind. Disquisitions, arguments, satires and sonnets, seem to the uninstructed eye things of so airy and impotent a nature, that experience alone leads to their being regarded with suspicion. Men who wield the formidable sanctions which civil or ecclesiastical governments engender, are always inclined to view the meagre and solitary student who has no engine but his pen, with an eye of contempt.

Heretics of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

There was however a race of men to whom the court of Rome was by no means inclined to extend the same toleration which she granted to the solemn doctor and the airy satirist: these were the heretics of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The most memorable families of this tribe were the Waldenses and the Albigenses. The former appear to have been merely melancholy enthusiasts.

The Waldenses.

Endeavouring to reduce Christianity to its original standard, they insisted that the rich among them should sell all they had and divide with the poor, and required their clergy to be illiterate, poor and destitute, like the fishermen who first taught the religion of Jesus. They were distinguished by the wretchedness of their apparel, an austere countenance and an emaciated frame; and, if any were allowed to bear the name of their sect without submitting to these rigours, they served to swell the numbers of the party, but were admitted only into its subordinate and less

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reputable classes [h]. The Albigenses, with the same exterior features of character, were materially distinguished from the Waldenses by the articles of their creed. They derived their descent from the Gnostics of the primitive ages of Christianity. They held that the material world was the work of an inferior divinity, the whole of whose proceedings were in opposition to the pure spirit, the elder and supreme God. They maintained that Jesus Christ assumed the similitude alone of a human body, and only seemed to have expired on the cross. From their fundamental principle of the stubborn and rebellious qualities of matter, they deduced a multitude of arguments in favour of the maceration of the flesh, and the mortification of the most innocent desires of man [i].

Sanguinary persecutions.

Systems like these, if they had generally prevailed, had a tendency to destroy that literature, refinement and civilisation, which about this time took their rise in modern Europe. There was however little reason to apprehend that they could have so alarming and extensive a diffusion. The court of Rome felt an animosity against these sects, not in proportion to the danger they menaced to the fabric of civil society, but measured by the contrast they afforded to the corruption and degeneracy of the established church. The heretics were not more extravagant in their attempts to introduce a savage and comfortless mode of existence, than the court of Rome was in its pride, arrogance, luxuriousness and venality. The austerities too of the heretics,

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[h] Mosheim, Historia Ecclesiastica, Cent. XII, Pars II, cap. v, §. 11, 12, 13.
[i] Ditto, Cent. XIII, Pars II, cap. v, §. 3—8. Gibbon, Chap. LIV.

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however ridiculous they may be in our eyes, were exactly fitted to seize the imagination, and procure the applause, of the men of their own times. Accordingly, the progress of their tenets was rapid, and nobles and princes were forward to declare themselves their abettors. On the other hand, the hostility of the Roman pontiff was expressed in no equivocal language or temporising proceedings. His measure was a crusade; and his machine the inquisition, which was expressly invented for this occasion. So bloody a war as that carried on by Simon de Montfort at the head of the crusaders of Languedoc, and St. Dominic who led the tribunals for the detection of heretical pravity, is scarcely elsewhere to be found in the history of the world.

System of Wicliffe.

Such was the state of actual power and of heretical innovation in the church of Rome, previously to the enterprises of Wicliffe. This celebrated reformer appears deeply to have meditated his plan, before he commenced his career. He attacked no mere outposts of the church, as had been done by St. Amour, Fitzralph and Grossteste. His conceptions were cast in a very different mould from those of the heretics of the preceding centuries. The extravagances of the Gnostics, the Manicheans, and a hundred other sects into which the church had been rent, were such as to have brought the name of innovation in doctrine into contempt. Had Wicliffe imitated their example, his efforts for reformation would have experienced a fate similar to theirs.

He opposes the supremacy of the pope,

All that he taught was bold, manly and strongly conceived, but perfectly simple. He opposed the supremacy of the pope. He saw no authority in reason or in Scripture, by which the referring the whole sovereign power

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penances, pardons, indulgences, and prayers for the dead,

over the church of Christ to one centre, the bishop and court of Rome, could be vindicated. He exposed in glowing colours the infinite multitude of usurpations which had grown out of this spurious principle. Penances, pardons, licences to infringe a positive institution, masses for the dead, and works of supererogation constituting a bank of merit to be arbitrarily disposed of for the benefit of the living, he held up to that contempt with which, employed as they were for occasions to the vilest abuses, they have been viewed by all sober men from his time to the present. He saw in them a traffic rendering the court of Rome the most venal and unprincipled then existing on the face of the earth, and a means of slavery reducing its votaries to a state of mind the most feeble, pitiable and abject. He did not scruple to denominate this mighty fabric of superstition Antichrist, and to affirm that the pope was that " man of sin" of whom St. Paul and St. John prophesied in the sacred writings. The object toward which his desires were directed was to vindicate every Christian into " the liberty with which Christ had made us free," invigorated by enquiry and instruction, and accustomed to consult only his own judgment and conscience.

the pride and luxury of the hierarchy.

The prelacy, such as he saw it in his times, was to Wicliffe another object of animosity and invective. Bishops during the dark ages had been gradually rising into the condition of temporal princes. They grasped the sword with that hand which should have been devoted to the crosier, and frequently exhibited themselves, cased in steel, in the midst of the field of war. They formed themselves into a close and well compacted incorporation, a principal object of which was to resist the authority of the state, to hurl defiance to

legislatures and kings, and to place the spiritual power superior to the resentment and control of the civil. At the same time they were inattentive to the instruction of the people, and too often callous and indifferent to the decorum of their station. Recollecting the base purposes which it served, Wicliffe was an unrelenting enemy to the luxury and ostentation of the heads of the church. The object he had at heart was the establishment of a preaching clergy, not the instruments of a foreign power, not debauched by opulence and state, but who, reviving in their own persons the simplicity and ingenuousness of the apostolic times, should feel no incentive to mislead and trample upon those whom they were bound to cherish, to instruct and reform. He inveighed against the exemption of the priesthood from secular jurisdiction, and urged the necessity of putting them upon a footing with the rest of the community. He opposed the celibacy of the clergy, as founded in erroneous views of human nature, and as tending to draw them together into a party having no feelings in common with their fellow subjects and fellow citizens.

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and the celibacy of the clergy.

Wicliffe was nevertheless a zealous advocate for the doctrines of predestination and grace, and his creed tended to represent the creator of the world as an arbitrary being, capriciously deciding upon the fates of mankind [k]. In the leader of the honourable band of reformers, we must not expect to find a philosopher. If his soul had not been inspired with the fervours of zeal and enthusiasm, he never

Wicliffe a predestinarian.

[k] For a minute account of the tenets of Wicliffe, supported by extracts of his writings, see Lewis, Life of Wicliffe, passim.

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could have been the founder of a sect, the members of which were indiscriminately taken from every class in the community.

Grandeur of his views.

But, without regarding Wicliffe as the object of our unmingled admiration, it is easy to perceive that his views were of the grandest sort, and that he was substantially and eminently the benefactor of mankind. He aimed at producing a revolution in the morals of his country and of Europe. For this purpose he invited men to shake off the trammels of implicit faith, and to judge for themselves. He instructed them to look beyond the outside of things. He taught them that they were to be acquitted or condemned, not by the censures, the excommunications and absolutions of another, but by their own character and actions. He pointed his satire against religious arrogance, ostentation and venality. He recommended simplicity of judgment, plainness in conduct, and purity of heart.

for the improvement of morality.

and the emancipation of the human understanding.

His creed was similar to that of Calvin, a gloomy doctrine, equally condemned by the understanding, and revolting to the heart. But he gave a new impulse to the human mind. He called upon his fellow men to reject a faith which had been entailed upon them for ages. He bid them inspect, examine and enquire. He invited them to apply the touchstone of a severe logic to every doctrine and practice, however sanctioned by length of prescription, which they were required to embrace. He gave them as food for their reflections, not a few abstruse metaphysical subtleties, the amusement of the idle, but a discussion relative to questions of the utmost moment to their prosperity here and their felicity in an invisible world, and calculated to act upon all the passions of the soul. He

broke the chains of superstition and pusillanimous terror under which Europe had so long groaned, and bade millions be free.

Puritanical complexion of his tenets.

Wicliffe was too nearly what has since been understood by the term, a puritan. He did not sufficiently take into consideration some of the fundamental properties of the human mind. He did not enough regard man as the creature of his senses. He was too severely inclined to strip religion of its ornaments. Enthusiasm, founded upon abstractions alone, is a short-lived passion. It may be lively and operative in one generation, but it will subside into torpor in the next. In the ordinary and transient concerns of human life we rarely feel a strong and permanent attachment but to what we see. In like manner in religion we can never have a system, uniform, genial and nutritive of the purest affections and habits, without the solemnities of worship, the decencies of architecture, the friendly alliance of harmonious sounds, or the fragrance of delicious odours.

Wicliffe's plan of attack upon the established church was however that which was probably best calculated for effect in the times in which he lived. The ideas of men in these times, as of the bulk of mankind in all ages, were gross. If he had endeavoured to ascertain the exact medium between the profuse magnificence of the church as then established, and the extreme of severe simplicity, and had recommended that alone, he would not have been understood. He would not have afforded to the minds of his contemporaries any thing sufficiently palpable for their grasp, nor have produced that shock and surprise which are necessary as the impulse to a revolution. The awful

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and apostolic plainness which he exhibited was indispensible to his success.

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Intimacy of Wicliffe and Chaucer.

Such was the man whose counsels were listened to by the king of Castille, and whose talents and acuteness were employed by him in the most important transactions. Such was the man who divided his favour with Chaucer; and we may reasonably believe, what the historians have concurred to report to us, that there was a considerable degree of friendship and attachment between the divine and the poet[1]. It seldom happens that a man of so acute a mind, such a master of the human passions, and so popular and eloquent a declaimer, as Wicliffe, is void of relish for profaner literature, and the sallies of imagination and invention. On the other hand, we may be well assured that Chaucer had that comprehension of sentiment, and exactness of observation, which fitted him properly to estimate the merits of the fervent and austere reformer.

Religious purposes of the king of Castille.

Wicliffe, as has already been observed, was a puritan; but we have no reason to impute that character to the king of Castille. It is not related of him as of some of the most eminent nobles and statesmen in the reign of Elizabeth, that he manifested a passion for long sermons, or invited the Lollard divines to join in pious exercises under his roof. A few years after this, we find him differing with and separating himself from Wicliffe, when the reformer, stimulated by the success of his first experiments, proceeded to a length which his patron deemed impolitic or injurious. The views of Wicliffe were of a

[1] Fox, Speght, Urry, Lewis, &c.

spiritual sort; he opposed the established church, not because he had less, but because he had more, of the religious sentiment, than the majority of its stoutest champions. The views of John of Gaunt appear to have been of a political nature. He saw how much the incroachments of the church of Rome had trenched upon the integrity of the English government, and he deemed it an object worthy of his efforts to repel and put an end to these incroachments. As a patron of the reformation in England, it is natural to compare him with his descendant, Henry VIII, and he will appear to great advantage in the comparison. He did not aim at the indiscriminate ruin of hoary and venerable establishments, nor was he urged by the low promptings of a rapacious temper. He owed nothing, as Henry did, to the spur of a sensual appetite disappointed of its ends, but took up the reformation of the church deliberately, in the commencement of his political life, as one of the means by which most effectually to serve his country. He was no persecutor; he did not fluctuate from side to side, led by the impulse or caprice of the moment. The resemblance is greater and more striking in many respects, of John of Gaunt to Wolsey, the minister of Henry. Like Wolsey, while he effectually wielded the government of his own country, he aspired to a foreign sovereignty; Wolsey to the papacy, John of Gaunt to the sovereignty of Spain. Like Wolsey, he was splendid and ostentatious; magnificent in his temper, and tasteful in the bent and character of his mind. Like Wolsey, he sought to be surrounded by servants of a bold, vigorous and active cast of disposition. And like Wolsey, he was anxious to prove himself a patron of literature and

Compared with Henry VIII.

with cardinal Wolsey.

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science; and posterity are deeply indebted to him for his exertions for that end.

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Chaucer obtains the wardship of Edmund Stapelgate.

In the course of the year of which we are treating, Chaucer received from the bounty of the crown the wardship of Edmund Stapelgate a minor; that is, the custody of all the estates which devolved to him by the death of his father, together with his *maritagium*, or the fee which a tenant holding immediately from the crown, paid for the royal consent, in case he contracted marriage while a minor[m]. This grant was in perfect conformity to the manners of the times. By the feudal institutions, the wardship and marriage of a minor, being a tenant *in capite*, fell to the crown; and it was frequent for the king to bestow them as boons upon such of his courtiers as he principally favoured. We may judge of the importance of the grant in this instance, from the circumstance of Chaucer's ward having been a co-petitioner with the earl Arundel, though an unsuccessful one, for the honour of officiating as butler to the king at the coronation of Richard II[n]. It also appears from the same circumstance that the minority could not have been a long one, since we find the ward acting in his own behalf on this occasion, in less than two years after the date of the grant. The heir finally redeemed the rights which had been conferred upon Chaucer for the sum of £. 104, equal in money of the present times to £. 1,872 sterling.

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[m] Appendix, No.

[n] Appendix, No.

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FACTIOUS PROCEEDINGS OF *THE GOOD PARLIAMENT.*—PROMPTED BY WILLIAM OF WYKEHAM.—PROGRESS OF THE SENTIMENTS OF WICLIFFE.—ODIUM EXCITED AGAINST THE KING OF CASTILLE.—DEATH OF THE BLACK PRINCE.

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THE domestic transactions of the fiftieth year of Edward III. are more extraordinary and worthy of notice than those of any other period of the reign of that prince.

State of public affairs.

The king of Castille had now been for about ten years the first minister of his father, and had conducted the affairs of his country with little apparent opposition during the whole of that time. He had led the armies of England; he had negotiated for her in her discussions with her great neighbour and rival; and he had meditated profound plans for her religious emancipation and the improvement of her ecclesiastical constitution. He had taken into his familiarity the most eminent geniuses the island then had to boast, and had embellished his court with the services of Wicliffe and Chaucer.

A slight instance of contention had occurred in the government of Edward III. in the year 1371: but it

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had been quieted by the removal of William of Wykeham from the office of chancellor; and John of Gaunt flattered himself that he had succeeded in retaining the goodwill of this prelate by his civilities and attentions, after he ceased to be a minister. But in this he was exceedingly deceived. A secret party had been forming for a considerable time against the government, and we shall see reason to believe that Wykeham was the soul of this party. Every thing bore a favourable aspect upon their machinations, and every thing was industriously and ably taken advantage of to the injury of the king of Castille.

Declining state of Edward III.

Edward III. was now in the sixty-sixth year of his age, and his infirmities were greater than are frequently incident to that period. He had nearly withdrawn himself from all knowledge of public affairs, and studied only his ease. This was a matter of general notoriety; and the administration of his son was thus in a great degree in want of the royal name to give it currency and countenance. It was evident that the king drew toward the close of his life; at the same time that the health of the Black Prince, the heir apparent, was now in so deplorable a state, that his decease was almost daily expected. Every one therefore began to look toward a change in the head of the government, and to calculate anxiously respecting the events which might attend upon such an occurrence. The Black Prince had an only child, afterward Richard II, nine years of age. The individual nearest to the throne after him, was Philippa, only daughter of Lionel duke of Clarence. This lady had been married soon after the death of her father, to Edmund Mortimer earl of

March[a], and had born him several sons, now infants, the eldest of whom was afterward declared by Richard II. successor to the crown. The king of Castille, as the prince next of blood to the throne who was of full age, was looked to as the natural guardian of the realm in case of the death of Edward III. and the Black Prince; and this circumstance, while at first sight it gave additional weight to his measures and authority, excited the prudent and considerate to mark his proceedings with a jealous eye, and afforded an opening for the factious to misrepresent his most innocent actions, and to charge him with the basest intentions.

Imputed views of the king of Castille.

The laws of succession to the crown were by no means so well known and so indisputable at this time, as practice and the lapse of events have since rendered them. The monarchs who now reigned disdained to consult precedents from the time of the Saxons, and affected to date the commencement of civilisation and reason in the island from the period of the Conquest. Since that epoch many deviations had occurred from the ordinary course of succession. The younger sons of William the Conqueror had obtained the crown in prejudice of the eldest. Stephen, the nephew of William by one of his daughters, had reigned after Henry I, thus superseding the claim of Henry's daughter the empress Maud, and her infant son. The minor son of an elder brother had in like manner been set aside when king John took possession of the crown.

The king of Castille therefore would have been at no

[a] Sandford, Book III, Chap. xiii.

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loss for precedents and arguments drawn from past events, if he had in reality aspired to the throne. There were two circumstances however which in the present instance operated strongly in favour of the regular order of succession: the character of the Black Prince, which gave the people of England a feeling as if he were already in part the sovereign of the realm, and would not have suffered them for any inducement to tarnish the honour due to his memory by a disregard shown to his offspring; and the honourable temper which the whole of his history proves to have belonged to John of Gaunt, rendering ambition an inferior principle in his breast to the love of honour and justice, and determining him in all cases to prefer the lustre of his name to the possession of an unfair and usurping authority. He was however a man of warm passions, of a generous nature, and hasty in resolution; the precise character that a cold and crafty adversary would desire, to play upon with dextrous artifice, to blacken with groundless accusations, and to provoke to false and impolitic measures.

Conspiracy formed against him.

These circumstances were eagerly improved by the party which, as we have said, first raised itself into notice in the commencement of the present year. They did not neglect the obvious argument, of the necessity of securing the eventual succession of the minor prince, against the projects of an uncle, whose talents were considerable, and whose influence in the government of his country was great and of long standing. They affirmed that he had meditated the introduction of a law, to place the succession to the English crown upon a footing with the Salic law in France, hereby plainly indicating the ambitious views

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which he secretly cherished [b]. And they industriously propagated the rumour, that their machinations against him were privately countenanced by the Black Prince, now confined to his bed.

It is not easy to determine who were and who were not active in the party which was now formed. A list was drawn up of the persons to whom they desired that the powers of government might be confided. But this list contained the names of several who do not appear to have entered into their views. They probably wished to conciliate these individuals by such a measure, and by the sanction of their reputation to recommend the projects they had formed. The only guide therefore which we have, enabling us to determine who were the leaders, is the considering against whom the resentment of the king of Castille was afterward directed. These were the earl of March husband to the princess Philippa and earl marshal of the realm, and William of Wykeham.

Convocation of the Good Parliament.

The whole plot was prepared, and seems to have been arranged with great secrecy, previously to the meeting of parliament on the twenty-eighth of April [c]. John of Gaunt was absent. He had been at Bruges, engaged in the negotiations which led to the prolongation of the truce between England and France, signed on the twelfth of March; and

[b] Parker, De Antiquitate Britannicæ Ecclesiæ, Cap. LVIII. Ms. Harleian. No. 6217. This manuscript is quoted by Lowth, in his Life of Wykeham, who has decided that it is the production, exactly or nearly, of the times to which it relates.

[c] Cotton, ad ann.

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he was still detained by various affairs on the continent[d]. It was while he continued abroad for the service of his country, that his adversaries opened their hostilities against him.

Coalition of parties.

The faction which suddenly assumed the government of the kingdom was composed of strange materials. Courteney bishop of London, the most imperious churchman of the times, as well as Wykeham bishop of Winchester, was among its leaders. Yet these men, for political purposes, found it convenient to combine with the followers of Wicliffe. It has never been suspected that Wicliffe himself was favourable to their views; his attachment to John of Gaunt was too firm and avowed to admit of such an imputation. His disciples however must have been at this time both numerous and powerful, to account for their tenets making so considerable a figure in the parliamentary proceedings of this year.

Remonstrance against the usurpations of Rome.

Among these one of the most remarkable was a long bill preferred by the commons against the usurpations of the pope, affirming them to be the cause of all the plagues, injuries, famine and poverty of the realm, so that there was not left the third person, nor the third part of the commodities, within the kingdom, that it had lately contained. They added, that the tax paid to the pope for ecclesiastical dignities amounted to five times as much as the tax appertaining to the king for the whole realm; that, for one bishopric or other dignity, the pope had sometimes,

[d] Collins, Peerage of England: duke of Northumberland.

by translation and death, three, four or five several taxes; that the brokers of the sinful city of Rome for money promoted many caitiffs, altogether unlearned and unworthy, to livings of one thousand marks yearly, while the learned and worthy hardly obtained twenty marks; that aliens, enemies to the land, and who never saw nor cared to see their parishioners, enjoyed these livings; and that there was no prince in Christendom who possessed the fourth part so much treasure, as the pope drew out of this realm most sinfully. They observed that lay patrons, perceiving this simony and covetousness of the sovereign pontiff, learned to sell their benefices to beasts, no otherwise than as Christ was sold to the Jews; and they prayed the king to re-edify and reform the church, the rather as this was the year of jubilee, the fiftieth of his reign, than which there could not be a more joyful occasion [e].

This mode of presenting a bill or representation to the king, with his reply, was in the fourteenth century the ordinary form for making a law. Edward III, who lay sick at Eltham when this remonstrance was presented to him, returned a cold answer, that he had heretofore by statute provided sufficient remedy, and that he was otherwise pursuing the points complained of with the pope [e]. This answer may be supposed to have been perfectly agreeable to the ecclesiastical leaders of the moment, who intended that the business should have no other termination; at the same time that, by supporting the bill in the commons, they gained the good will and countenance of the reforming

[e] Cotton, ad ann.

CHAP. XXXIX. party, and procured to the legislature who passed it the appellation of the Good Parliament from the populace.

1376. Parliamentary prosecutions.

The commons then proceeded, in a way which has often been imitated since, to attack individuals who were trusted with the conduct of public affairs, for the purpose of bringing odium upon the general system of administration. After having voted the ordinary supplies, they drew up a protestation, in which they declared that, if the king had had faithful counsellors and servants, he could not but have surpassed all other princes in treasure, considering the ransoms which had been paid for the kings of France and Scotland, beside the subsidies he had received from his subjects. They accused Richard Lyons, farmer of the king's subsidies and customs, of backing certain improper licences for the transportation of commodities, of buying up the king's debts in some instances, and taking money to procure payment of them in others. They charged William lord Latimer, lord chamberlain, with having collected contributions in victuals and money, while he served under the king in Britanny, of which he had never rendered an account, with having sold provisions belonging to the army, and with various misdemeanours in the loss of certain towns and fortresses which had been taken by the French. They also accused John lord Neville of Raby, of having bought, or corruptly procured payment of, two debts due by the king, and of having received wages for an hundred soldiers serving in Britanny, to a greater amount, and for a longer time, than was due to him. Most of these charges are said to have been satisfactorily repelled. Others, after an examination of the parties, were voted to be well founded. Each of the persons accused, together

with several of a subordinate station, was committed to prison, the property of Lyons and lord Neville was declared confiscate, and lord Latimer was fined in the sum of twenty thousand marks [f]. CHAP. XXXIX. 1376.

They next adopted a measure, which can reflect nothing but disgrace upon the parties concerned, and in which was conspicuously blended the rigorous severity of puritanism, with the bold and unfeeling ambition of William of Wykeham.

History of Catherine Swinford.

The king of Castille lived at this time in open adultery. He had married, as we have before seen, the daughter of Peter the Cruel from ambitious views, for whom he does not seem to have ever felt any genuine attachment. The marriage appears to have been concluded with great precipitation, and was in every way inauspicious. It was perhaps the principal false step in the life of this prince.

John of Gaunt however, though he had thus married, had not abjured the feelings of a man. Some years after having espoused the Spanish princess, he cast the eyes of affection upon the sister of Chaucer's wife, who has already more than once been mentioned [g]. In the life-time of the duchess Blanche, she had attended upon that princess, and was afterward intrusted with the education of her daughters. This lady had since been married to sir Hugh Swinford. With the date of this event we are not acquainted; but the son and heir of

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[f] In modern money £.120,000. Cotton, ad ann.

[g] See particularly Vol. I, Chap. XXII, p. 455.

CHAP. XXXIX. 1376. sir Hugh appears to have been born in the year 1368, and the lady became a widow four years afterward [h]. Stow has affirmed that she had previously been the concubine of the king of Castille, that she then married sir Hugh Swinford, and that after the death of her husband her intimacy with the king of Castille was renewed [i]. But there is not the smallest foundation for this statement. In the sentence in which it is made, Stow confounds all chronology, by representing the previous connection as belonging to the period of John of Gaunt's second marriage. The marriage of sir Hugh Swinford must, as we have seen, have taken place at least four years prior to that event. The earliest trace I have discovered, forcibly indicating the connection of the king of Castille with Catherine Swinford, belongs to the year 1377 [k]. We may conceive that it was after the period of her becoming a widow in 1372, that she undertook the education of the king of Castille's daughters. They were too young at the time of their mother's death, and much more so at that of Catherine Swinford's marriage, to need a very accomplished instructress. It was out of the familiarity of intercourse consequent upon this situation (in the language of Sandford, " his often visits to the nursery"), that the attachment between her and her princely protector, of which we are here treating, insensibly grew.

It is undoubtedly much to be regretted, that persons, occupying so eminent a station, should set such an ex-

[h] Esc. 46 Edv. 3, n. 54.

[i] Annals, A. D. 1396.

[k] Rymer, Tom. VII, 51 Edv. 3, Mar. 4.

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ample of disregard to those institutions and forms which are essential to the maintenance of the established order of society. But none but a bigot will affirm an error of this sort to be of such magnitude, as to disqualify a man, who is by his birth, according to the constitution of his country, called to a certain station, from discharging its functions, or entering upon its privileges.

of Alice Perrers.

An unfortunate coincidence existed as to the particular here treated of, between the situation of the king of Castille and of his father. There was a lady, said to have been of exquisite beauty, named Alice Perrers, who had attended upon the person of queen Philippa, in the same manner as Catherine Swinford had attended upon the duchess Blanche. At least two years before the death of the queen we have strong presumptive evidence that Edward III. had indulged an amorous familiarity with this lady. Philippa indeed was then about fifty-five years of age; yet Edward III. was in one respect less excusable than the king of Castille, as we unquestionably know that queen Philippa was a woman of the most admirable endowments, and had discharged the duties of a wife and a mother to a numerous family, with a merit rarely to be paralleled in persons of her station.

The favour which Alice Perrers enjoyed from her royal lover was of the most conspicuous sort. Scarcely a year passed during the last ten years of Edward III, in which she did not receive some signal mark of the bounty of the crown. In the year 1368 the king bestowed upon her an estate which had devolved to him by the death of Mary his aunt, widow of Thomas of Brotherton younger

CHAP. XXXIX. 1376.

son of Edward I[l]; in 1373 he gave her all the jewels and moveables which had belonged to his late queen Philippa[m]; and the old historians have mentioned, as a proof of the king's devoted regard for her, that in the year 1374 in a tournament which was held in Cheapside, she appeared mounted upon a white palfrey, in splendid attire, as mistress of the solemnity, being distinguished by the appellation of the Lady of the Sun[n].

Parliamentary proceedings against her.

This lady was one of the victims of party-rage selected by the Good Parliament. Among their votes hostile to the government one runs thus: The king ordaineth that henceforth no woman shall for maintenance or lucre present any matter in any of the king's courts, and particularly Alice Perrers, on pain of forfeiting all she has, and being banished the realm for ever. The historians are divided as to the manner in which this ordinance was carried into execution. One states that from the lady[o], and another that from the king[p], an oath was exacted, that she should never again come into his presence. If this last were the fact, the victor of the field of Cressy must indeed have been sunk into a most humiliating condition.

This however is not the whole of what was done against Alice Perrers. We find by the records of the ensuing parliament, that judgment had been given against her, and (as it would seem) her property confiscated[q]. Upon what

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[l] Pat. 42 Edv. 3, p. 1, m. 2.

[m] Pat. 47 Edv. 3, p. 2, m. 23.

[n] Stow, Survey of London: Farringdon ward without.

[o] Walsingham, A. D. 1376.

[p] Ms. Harleian. No. 6217. The statement of Walsingham also implies the same.

[q] Cotton, 51 Edv. 3.

articles of charge this proceeding was founded does not appear. We shall presently have occasion to cite the judgment of an impartial antiquary upon the accusations exhibited against her by the same party in the commencement of the following reign.

Considering that Wykeham was probably the individual whose judgment was principally resorted to by the party by whom these measures were concerted; that he had in early youth become the favourite of Edward III, and that the king, having raised him from a humble station, had afterward profusely loaded him with preferments and wealth; it is not easy to find an instance in the records of history, in which private pique has in a more indecent and unprincipled manner prompted the conduct of a public character. It was a shameless example of ingratitude, for this man, who owed every thing to the bounty and partiality of his sovereign, thus to trample upon his dotage, and to drag his private weaknesses and foibles to the view and condemnation of the world. It was barbarous to dictate in this unfeeling manner to a monarch who had once been the arbiter of Europe; and to tear from the aged prince, now in his sixty-fifth year, a companion and confident whom habit had rendered necessary to him.

Such will be the decision of every candid observer, whatever may have been the faults imputed to the lady. The punishment exceeded the offence; and a generous mind would at least have found some expedient less harsh than that of forbidding to the venerable king her society and conversation. It is fair however to take into the account the charges that were exhibited against her.

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She is insinuated in the ordinance, to have presented matter in the king's courts for maintenance and lucre. Stow says, that "shee, exceeding the manner of women, sate by the king's justices, and sometimes by the doctors in the consistories, perswading and disswading[r]" them. But it is Stow also who says, that, when the king was on his death-bed, she amused him with "talk rather of hawking and hunting, than of any thing that pertained to the saving of his soule;" and that, when she found he was at the point of expiring, "shee tooke the ringes from his fingers, which for the royaltie of his majestie hee was wont to weare, and so withdrew her selfe from him[r]:" a vulgar rumour, which no impartial and capable writer would have condescended to echo. Sir Robert Cotton gives it as his opinion, that "the record against the said dame [1 Ric. 2.] being very long, proveth no such heinous matter against her; and, these two suits wherefore she was condemned, seemed very honest; her mishap was, that she was friendly to many, but all were not so to her." In fine, after the death of Edward III. she married lord Windsor, lord lieutenant of Ireland, one of the most distinguished nobles and soldiers of his time; a circumstance which affords considerable presumption that nothing base or abandoned was generally believed against her.

It is natural then to enquire what could be the motive with the prevailing party in parliament, for so violently trampling upon the decorum due to a venerable character,

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[r] A.D. 1376, 1377. These censures are copied by Stow from the monastic chronicle of Thomas Walsingham.

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and compelling the king thus publicly to discard the chosen companion of his hours of retirement and leisure. It was done partly no doubt on the same principle that had dictated the long bill against Rome in the commons; the desire to cajole the favour, and purchase the good opinion, of the puritanical party. They were beside well pleased by this proceeding to throw a stigma upon the private conduct of the king of Castille, though they had no pretence to interfere in his domestic concerns. We have also abundant reason to believe that this lady, however by her conduct she had forfeited her character with her own sex, was not deficient in integrity and spirit to defend her royal lover from injury and insult. Add to which, to degrade their sovereign, and to hold him up to public view as the victim of imbecility and dotage, were the suitable means to reconcile the nation to their next measure, with which all their others were connected, and to which they were subordinate.

Executive government put into commission.

Having thus in various ways shown the turbulence and rudeness of its character, the parliament completed its encroachments by appointing a committee of nine counsellors, consisting of the archbishop of Canterbury, the bishops of London and Winchester, the earls of March, Arundel and Stafford, and the lords Percy, Brian and Beauchamp [a], together with the chancellor, treasurer, and keeper of the privy seal, for the time being, without whose consent nothing of importance in the public concerns should be transacted. This sort of committee of govern-

[a] MS. Harleian. No. 247.

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ment was formed precisely upon the model of the usurpations of the barons in the reigns of Henry III. and Edward II, when it has been supposed that not only the character of the reigning sovereign was degraded, but that the constitution was made dangerously to incline toward a fierce and uncontrolable aristocracy, such as the government of Poland afterward became. Thus did this arrogant prelate proceed in the gratification of his passions, exposing without compunction the privacies of his sovereign, not hesitating to undermine the monarchy itself, and showing himself willing to bring the church establishment into danger, rather than not gratify his love of political power, or his thirst of private revenge against the prince who had deprived him of office.

Of the counsellors who were appointed to constitute the committee of government, all are not understood to have entered into the cabal against the king of Castille. The archbishop of Canterbury is supposed to have inclined to his party, and lord Percy appears to have been at this time abroad in his train[t]. This nobleman was afterward earl of Northumberland, and father of Henry surnamed Hotspur.

New ambassadors.

The last measure adopted against the king of Castille was the superseding him in his office of negotiator for a treaty of peace with the court of France. On the twelfth of June the new committee of government named John Gilbert now bishop of Hereford, John lord Cobham, and two others, ministers plenipotentiary to treat with

[t] Collins, Peerage of England, ubi supra.

the ambassadors of Charles V. in the room of John of Gaunt and his colleagues [a].

1376. Decease of the Black Prince.

It was during this period of commotion and disaster, in which his name was treacherously employed to insult his father and undermine the government, that the Black Prince expired. This melancholy event is supposed to have rendered the aged king the more reckless of what followed, and passive in the hands of the usurpers.

His military character.

I cannot dismiss finally the character of the Black Prince, without noticing an admirably expressive phrase with which Froissart winds up his narrative of the battle of Poitiers: The prince of Wales, says he, who was as courageous and cruel as a lion, took great pleasure this day in fighting and chasing his enemies [b]. In these words we have presented to us a striking image of the manners and temper of the knights of chivalry. They were men of courtesy and honour. Take them in the chamber of peace; it is impossible to figure to ourselves any thing more humane. When occasion called them to succour the oppressed, and raise the dejected, overwhelmed by some brutal and insulting foe, they appeared like Gods descended from heaven for the consolation of mankind. But the garb of peace, however gracefully they wore it, they regarded as only an accident of their character. War was their profession, their favourite scene, the sustenance of their life. If it did not offer itself to them at home, they would seek it to the ends of the earth, and sell themselves to any master, rather than not find occasion to prove the

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[a] Rymer, Tom. VII, 50 Edw. 3, Jun. 12.

[b] Vol. I, Chap. clxiv.

CHAP. XXXIX. 1376. intrepidity of their temper, and the force of their arm. When they entered the field of battle, they regarded the business of war, not as a matter of dire and tremendous necessity, but as their selected pleasure. Their hearts were then particularly alive, and all their pulses beat with joy. They fought like tygers, and hunted their fellow men as the fierce Numidian pursues his savage prey. Soldiers in almost all cases of war, but particularly in the history of these rude and early ages, subsist partly by ravage, robbery and spoil; and we may easily conceive what sort of temper this is likely to beget toward the helpless and unoffending victims of their plunder. It is a part of the art of war to lay waste whole provinces, that the enemy may be reduced to want. One of the great lessons of the military school is to estimate human life at a very cheap rate. These unfortunate errors all became much exaggerated in our ancestors, by the immeasurable distance which rank at that time placed between man and man. They mowed down whole companies of ordinary men, with no greater remorse than the peasant feels when he mows his field. They snuffed the scent of blood, and found themselves refreshed. This part of the chivalrous character is exactly illustrated in the sack of Limoges in 1370. While the question was only of the lives of men of an unhonoured class, of women and children, the Black Prince felt no touch of pity. He had been exasperated at the treachery of the ecclesiastical chief of the city, and his rage must be appeased. It was not till he saw illustrious knights and nobles gallantly and desperately contending for their lives with his royal brothers, that his resentment gave way, and he extended the olive of peace to all.

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It is incumbent upon us to conclude these reflections by stating that the vices of the Black Prince were those of his occupation and his times, and that his virtues were such as to set all parallel among his contemporaries at defiance.

A short time after the melancholy event of his death, the commons petitioned that the young prince his son, now heir apparent to the crown, might be sent to them, and appear in open parliament; and, their request in this point having been complied with, they immediately passed an unanimous vote praying that the lords would create him prince of Wales, as his father had been. The house of lords however, with more discretion or decency, answered that the power of complying with this prayer lay not with them, but that the king must be applied to for that purpose[x].

Reflections.

Whatever was the immediate success of the proceedings of this parliament, the ultimate consequences were singularly unfavourable to the king of Castille. The assembly in which they had passed obtained, as we have seen, the appellation of the Good Parliament; and, as this name sufficiently indicates, had taken deep root in the general opinion. They had skilfully blended their proceedings with the ideas of the reformation of the church which were at this time in their highest tide of public favour; and, though John of Gaunt had really laboured for reformation and the heads of the usurping party were its most determined adversaries, the people of England had not the sagacity to discern this, through the mist of de-

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[x] Cotton, 50 Edv. 3.

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lusion which was artfully employed to obscure it. The leaders of the reigning faction may now be considered as ambitious and ill-designing men; but, when defeated in their ends, they were at that time regarded with affection as the martyrs of the public cause. If the heart of the king of Castille was upright, his manners were not popular. In a word, this period was the crisis of his public life. Hitherto his career, on the whole, had been fortunate; from this time his lot was cast among troubles, obstinate contention, and eternal animosity. The calumnies which his enemies had propagated against him as seeking the ruin of his nephew were fastened upon his character; and the impatience he displayed under the imputation was explained as an indication of guilt, and led him into various measures hasty, unadvised and ungracious, thus continually affording new scope to the perverse and cold-blooded industry of his foes.

This consequence he partly foresaw, and his temper became to a certain degree embittered by the reflection. Another consequence resulted, which we may reasonably believe he did not foresee. The historians, contemporary with these events, were monks; and they regarded John of Gaunt with aversion and horror on account of his patronage of Wicliffe. The event has been, that we read in them continually of John of Gaunt's infamous designs to poison his nephew, to supersede the next heirs, and audaciously to possess himself of the crown; of the bondage in which he held Edward III; and of the resolution of the Black Prince to spend the last efforts of his expiring strength in defeating these base machinations. The Good Parliament of the populace of 1376 is the

Good Parliament still. The monks forgave them their zeal in the cause of heresy, since it was directed against the arch-heretic, the king of Castille; and succeeding generations, in consideration of their merit as the advocates of reformation, have remitted to them all their treasons. In the mean time, it is impossible to listen with an impartial ear to their achievements, and to hesitate as to the character that is due to them.

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CHAP. XL.

JOHN OF GAUNT NAMED TO ASSIST HIS FATHER IN THE GOVERNMENT.—PROSECUTION AGAINST WYKEHAM.—CITATION OF WICLIFFE.—CHAUCER'S EMBASSY TO FRANCE.—FAILS OF SUCCESS.—WAR.—DEATH OF EDWARD III.

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1376. John of Gaunt returns home.

THE king of Castille, who was now at Bourdeaux, heard with astonishment of the violence and insolences that were practising in his native country, and went on board certain vessels prepared for the purpose, with lord Percy and other nobles his followers, on the eighth of July. The parliament, whether alarmed at the idea of his approach or for some other cause, broke up two days after, and left their committee of government to maintain its station as it could.

overturns the usurpation of Wykeham.

What were the measures adopted by the king of Castille on his arrival, or in what manner the committee of government endeavoured to defend themselves, history has not informed us. Edward III. received his beloved son with open arms; the newly constituted committee was superseded without ceremony; John of Gaunt was declared the associate of his father in the government; and lord Latimer and the rest who had been prosecuted by the

late house of commons, together with Alice Perrers, were recalled to court [a]. CHAP. XL.

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Punishment of the usurpers.

The king of Castille however did not stop at this point. He thought it necessary to inflict some punishment upon the persons who had thus grossly insulted him, and flagrantly violated the laws of decency and the constitution of their country. If however we compare his vengeance with what was done under similar circumstances in the reigns of Edward II. and Richard II, we shall not fail to be struck with mildness of his proceeding.

sir Peter Delamare.

Sir Peter Delamare, steward to the earl of March, had undertaken the management of the house of commons in the late parliament, and is said to have conducted himself in the business, not only with great spirit and zeal, but with singular abilities and eloquence. This man was arrested, and conveyed prisoner to the castle of Newark, and afterward to Nottingham [b]. It was made matter of complaint against John of Gaunt, that he was seized when he presented himself in attendance upon the court, and, without any answer, and against all justice, committed to close custody [b].

the earl of March.

It is somewhat doubtful whether the king of Castille purposed to inflict any personal retribution upon the earl of March himself. All that is known on the subject, is that orders were issued to him from the king that, in quality of earl marshal of England, he should make inspection of the castle and town of Calais, as also of the castles and forts in the marches of Calais, should cause such repairs to be made as

[a] Walsingham, ad ann. [b] Ms. Harleian. No. 6217. Stow, ad ann.

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need might require, and should see them well victualled and manned [c]. The earl of March declared his repugnance to this commission, and chose rather to resign his marshal's staff than engage in it. John of Gaunt willingly accepted his determination, and immediately transferred the office of earl marshal, together with the commission respecting Calais, to his friend, lord Percy [d].

Articles of accusation against Wykeham.

The king of Castille proceeded with greater severity against William of Wykeham. The political grounds of this severity have already been developed; and certainly no conduct could be more worthy of reprehension than that of this ambitious leader. He had however, in the true style of a crafty and practised statesman, sheltered himself behind the forms of law, and was inaccessible to the ordinary modes of proceeding against a public delinquent. What he had done in the affair of Alice Perrers was of course not fitting matter for animadversion in the courts; and, in all the measures adopted by the reigning faction in the Good Parliament, he was sufficiently covered by that apology which has so frequently been at the service of bad ministers since, that he was but an individual, and that those measures to which the legislature of the nation had given its sanction were not proper subjects for a charge against one. The king of Castille therefore adopted as a model in the proceedings against Wykeham, the measures which had been employed in the Good Parliament against lord Latimer and other of the king's ministers. Articles

[c] Ms. Harleian, No. 6217. Stow, ad ann.

[d] Ms. Harleian and Stow, ubi supra. Collins, Peerage: earl of Northumberland.

of accusation were drawn up, charging him with having, during the eight years next following after the peace of Bretigni, embezzled the ransoms of the kings of France and Scotland, and other receipts to a great amount, which for the most part had not been applied to the profit of the king and kingdom, and which, if properly husbanded, would have spared the king the necessity of burthening his subjects with subsidies and loans on the breaking out of the subsequent war; with imposing heavy fines upon meritorious officers of the army, thereby driving them to acts of depredation and outlawry, and so bringing upon the nation the unhappy war of 1369; and with having grossly neglected the defence of Ponthieu, in consequence of which that country fell into the hands of the French without resistance in the commencement of the war [e].

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The biographer of Wykeham has extremely well, and with great force of reasoning, commented upon these articles of accusation [f], particularly remonstrating against the informality of charging upon Wykeham the general misapplication of the revenues of the kingdom, at a time when he was only chancellor, and by no means presided over the treasury of the realm. But this biographer, so quick-sighted when any accusation occurs bearing with severity upon the hero of his volume, passes over without animadversion his discreditable and time-serving alliance with the Lollards, his ungrateful and insolent intrusion upon the private hours of his royal benefactor, and his abetting a party whose purpose was to

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[e] Rymer, Tom. VII, 1 Ric. 2, Jul. 30.   [f] Lowth, Sect. IV.

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strip the crown of its prerogatives, and convert the government into a dangerous oligarchy. In all this, bishop Lowth says, "he stedfastly adhered to the interest of his great friend and patron the prince of Wales; and at the same time to the interests of the king, his kind master and generous benefactor; and to the interests of the public; which were indeed all equally concerned in the security of the lineal succession: and acted with so open and unreserved a zeal in this just and important cause, as could not but give offence to the duke of Lancaster[g]."

Temporalities of his bishopric sequestered.

The articles of accusation against Wykeham were exhibited before the council, in Michaelmas term of this year. A hearing shortly after took place before certain prelates and lords of the council deputed for that purpose, who, out of seven articles of charge, deferred the consideration of the first six, and came to a decision only upon the last. The purport of this article was, that Wykeham, while chancellor, had often irregularly, and of his own mere authority, reduced the amount of the fines entered in the Fine Rolls, and caused the rolls to be cancelled and altered; and particularly that he had in this manner changed the fine of one individual, who is named, from fourscore to forty pounds sterling[h]. Upon this charge the lords decided that the temporalities of the bishopric of Winchester should be seized into the hands of the king, till Wykeham should have made satisfaction to the king for his delinquency in this point. Shortly after, an order was issued, forbidding him to come within twenty miles

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[g] Lowth, Sect. IV.

[h] Rymer, ubi supra, Jul. 31.

of the court[1]. These proceedings took place in the month of November. CHAP. XL.

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Undoubtedly the article upon which Wykeham was condemned makes an insignificant figure in comparison with the grave and important crimes which were in the other articles laid to his charge, and which we have above enumerated. It is not practicable for us to decide, whether this article was selected as admitting of stricter and easier proof; or whether, which seems more probable, his illustrious adversary, from motives of clemency or of policy, was unwilling to drive Wykeham to despair, and studiously left a door open to conciliation and remission, at the same time that the heavier accusations were still suspended over his head. The measures adopted against him were certainly of the milder cast, and not such as would have been adopted by a vindictive foe, who had been thus mortally offended. Wykeham had been so assiduous and successful in the accumulation of wealth, that he might well spare the revenues of his bishopric during the time when he was thus under a cloud, without having any great injury to appeal to as a topic of complaint.

Richard created prince of Wales.

Having employed these methods of severity, if they deserve the name, the king of Castille next hastened to refute in the most effectual way the calumnies of his enemies, by installing in a solemn manner, on the twentieth of November, his nephew Richard in the dignities of prince of Wales, and formally declaring him successor to the crown. On this occasion an oath was taken by the

[1] Ms. Harleian. No. 6217. Parker, De Antiquitate Britannicæ Ecclesiæ, Cap LVIII.

CHAP. XL. 1376. nobles attendant upon the court, and particularly by the king's sons, by which they engaged to maintain and uphold his right, as their only lawful and undoubted sovereign, in the event of the decease of his grandfather[k]. It has been further remarked, as an act of animosity against Wykeham, that a grant was made, on the fifteenth of March following[l], of the temporalities of the bishopric of Winchester to the minor prince, in part of payment of the revenue which the king had settled upon him. But this seems scarcely to deserve so harsh a name. The temporalities, while sequestered by the act of council, must be enjoyed by some one; nor did this act in any degree increase the difficulty of restitution, as there was a clause in the grant to Richard, expressly stating that he was to receive the revenues of the bishopric for so long a time only as it should be thought proper to retain them in the hands of the king.

Another method was judiciously employed by the king of Castille, to mark the certainty of succession in his nephew. Edward III. had a sufficient interval of health toward the close of the year, to enable him to eat his Christmas dinner in public, according to the mode of the times. This festival was therefore celebrated with great magnificence, and prince Richard was seated at table in royal state above his uncles, as being already their superior in station, and by anticipation their master[k]. This exhibition, in itself of little importance, was happily chosen,

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[k] Froissart, Vol. I, Chap. cccxxv. [l] Rymer, ad annum & diem.

as tending to refute, by an appeal to the senses, the calumnies with which ill-designing men had sought to disturb the tranquillity of the realm. CHAP. XI. 1376.

Further mark of favour bestowed upon Chaucer.

It was in the course of the present year, and only a few days after John of Gaunt took his departure from Bourdeaux, that Chaucer obtained a grant of contraband wool, forfeited to the crown, to the amount of £.71 : 4 : 6 [n]: in present valuation, £. 1,262 : 1 : —. This grant, in addition to other circumstances, may serve to show how high Chaucer stood in the favour of the king of Castille, as it must have received the royal sanction almost at the instant of that prince's arrival in London, and while all the anxieties arising from his contest with his ungenerous enemies were fresh and unabated in his mind.

1377. A parliament.

A parliament was called in the beginning of the following year, and a writ made out authorising the young prince of Wales to open the session in the indisposition of his grandfather [o]. This parliament entered completely into the views of the king of Castille, and revoked the proceedings of the former year against lord Latimer, Richard Lyons, Alice Perrers and the rest, as having been obtained by false suggestions, and without due process. An act of general pardon was also passed, in consideration of the king having completed the fiftieth year of his reign, Wykeham alone being excepted [p]. The meeting was dis-

[n] Appendix, No.

[o] Cotton, 51 Edv. 3.

[p] Statutes at Large, printed by Berthelette, 1543. Stat. 50 (by mistake for 51) Edv. 3, cap. 3. See Cotton, ubi supra.

CHAP. XI. 1377. solved by the king in person at his palace of Shene on the twenty-third of February, after a continuance of four weeks only.

Citation of Wicliffe.

An event occurred at this time tending still further to unveil the character of the leaders of the predominant party in the Good Parliament. We have seen the coalition into which they entered at that period with the followers of Wicliffe. But they felt like true politicians, superior to the ordinary passions and weaknesses of human nature. While they used this sect, and obtained for themselves a momentary popularity by means of its numbers and importance, they had resolved upon its destruction. Being now themselves in adversity, they were the more bent upon this object; their hatred rose, in proportion to their disappointment. Besides, the chief of the obnoxious sect was avowedly patronised by the king of Castille, and to attack him was to injure his protector on the side where he was most obviously vulnerable.

The convocation of the clergy met on the third of February, one week subsequently to the opening of the parliament[q]. Immediately afterward, Wicliffe was cited to answer before his superiors, perhaps the upper house of convocation, to certain articles which were charged against him as innovation and heresy. The day fixed for the hearing was the nineteenth of February; the place, St. Paul's. The king of Castille, with that openness and intrepidity of temper which mark all his actions, determined not to leave

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[q] Parker, ubi supra.

the man he had patronised a prey to the malice of his enemies. He accordingly resolved, accompanied by the earl marshal and other friends, to repair with Wicliffe to the scene of trial. Sudbury, now archbishop of Canterbury, presided; Courteney, his successor in the see of London, took the lead in this prosecution[r]. This prelate had not expected the arrival of so illustrious visitors, and was irritated. High words arose on both sides, the representation of which has been handed down to us only by the monkish historians; the whole became a scene of confusion; and the sitting was abruptly dispersed. An order was soon after promulgated by its authority, enjoining silence upon Wicliffe in future, relative to the articles in question. This proposition was wholly disregarded.

The biographers of Wykeham and Wicliffe have endeavoured to throw some uncertainty upon this date[s]. Bishop Lowth says, "This affair could not have happened many days before the death of Edward III;" and Lewis is disposed to carry it over to the February of the following year. Their argument is founded upon the date of the pope's bulls against Wicliffe, May 22, 1377[t]. But the concurrence of all the contemporary writers is strongly against them[u]. These writers also casually mention the days of the week, which will be found to cor-

[r] Walsingham, ad ann. [s] Lowth, Sect. IV. Lewis, Chap. IV.

[t] See Walsingham, A. D. 1378, by whom they are recited at large.

[u] Walsingham, ad ann. Ms. Harleian. No. 6217. Stow is more full and minute than either of these writers, and evidently proceeds on the authority of some narrative which has not come down to us. Fox, Hollinshed, and other of the old writers, may be understood to have possessed a similar advantage.

CHAP. XL. 1377. respond with the days of the month to which they are assigned; an indirect evidence of great value. It is impossible that the transaction should belong, as Lewis has imagined, to the February of the following year. Lord Percy was then no longer earl marshal: he would besides have been mentioned by his new title, conferred at the coronation of Richard, of earl of Northumberland: and various particulars are introduced respecting the old king, some perhaps true and some false, but all marking the perfect consciousness of the old historians as to the reign in which the event happened. The whole is apparently the struggle of two powerful and violent parties, in the view of the great change which was shortly to occur. The argument from the date of the pope's bulls is of little force; since it is easy to suppose that the citation to St. Paul's was the immediate and personal act of the English prelacy, and that the citation of Wicliffe to Lambeth which occurred in the following year was the result of the pope's interference, the English bishops having found themselves too weak in the contest, and on that account having invited the interposition of the sovereign pontiff. This hypothesis is partly confirmed by the circumstance of Walsingham inserting the bulls under the following year.

Calumnies against the king of Castille.

On this occasion we are presented with a fresh example of the talents of this party in the arts of calumny. They industriously propagated a rumour that, on the day preceding the affair at St. Paul's, a proposition had been brought before parliament, by Thomas of Woodstock younger son of Edward III. and lord Percy earl marshal, that there should be no more a mayor of London according to ancient custom, but that a captain should be appointed to preside over the

metropolis, who should hold his office under the marshal of England, and be in all respects subject to his direction [w]. There is no trace of this proposition in the records; and historians have now generally agreed to treat it as the fabrication of the moment [x]. A meeting however of the citizens is said to have been called on the twentieth, in which they were cautioned against the designs of government upon their charter, and exhorted to take timely measures to prevent the menaced evil. It was added, by way of exasperating the populace, that the king of Castille had threatened to drag their bishop by the hair of his head out of his own cathedral.

Tumult.

The consequence of these machinations was, that an immense multitude, having assembled on the day of the city consultation, proceeded immediately to the mansion of the earl marshal, broke open the gates, set at liberty a prisoner they found there, and searched the whole house for lord Percy, with intent to insult or destroy him. From this place they proceeded to John of Gaunt's palace of the Savoy, where they committed similar outrages [y]. Here however, we are told the bishop of London made his appearance, undertook to pacify the mob, and intreated them to conduct themselves with more propriety, particularly in consideration of the holy season, it being Lent. Awed by his remonstrances, they withdrew, and contented themselves during the rest of the day, with hanging up in different parts of the city, the king of Castille's armorial

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[w] Stow, ad ann. [x] Barnes, Book IV, Chap. xiv, §. 7. Lowth, Sect. IV.

[y] Walsingham, Hollinshed and Stow, ad ann.

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bearings reversed, this being a mode of proceeding appropriated to signify that the person to whom they belonged was a traitor [z]. At the same time scurrilous rhymes and other abusive papers were posted in various places, for the purpose of bringing the government of the king of Castille into contempt [a].

Mayor dismissed from his office.

These measures, however low and contemptible they may now appear, had a memorable effect, at a time when knowledge and instruction were confined to so few, in fixing a lasting unpopularity and odium upon the personage against whom they were directed. They could not have occurred at a more unfortunate or critical moment, when the decease of the king was daily expected, and when every expedient would be requisite to give weight and importance to the regency which was to ensue, and to secure the tranquillity and defence of the kingdom. It seems that the city magistrates were understood to have in some way abetted or connived at the tumult, since we find that they were deprived of their offices, and that others were substituted for the remainder of the year [b].

Negotiations with France.

It has already been mentioned that the truce between England and France was to expire on the first of April of this year. A principal object therefore pressing upon the attention of the king of Castille was to place the relative situation of the two countries upon the most unequivocal footing, either by a treaty of peace, or, if that

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[z] Walsingham, Hollinshed and Stow, ad ann.

[a] Stow, ad ann.

[b] Walsingham says, *majorem & seniores deponit.* I doubt whether this is to be construed as extending to the court of aldermen. It is however so interpreted by Stow; and since him by Collins, and others.

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could not be effected, by a prolongation of the truce. It was peculiarly desirable that the reign of the minor prince, the commencement of which appeared to be near, should be uninterrupted with foreign misunderstandings. The proceedings which had taken place in the Good Parliament sufficiently indicated that, if the regency were placed in honourable hands, there would still be an adverse faction to contend with, powerful in ability, daring in temper, and little restrained by scruples arising from decorum or public interest, who would afford to the government, fettered as it must necessarily be during a minority, abundant matter for activity, anxiety and vigilance in its domestic concerns. They had even in all probability rendered the foreign negotiation more difficult, by changing the persons intrusted with the embassy, and thus betraying, to a prince so crafty as Charles V, the weakness of the government with which he had to deal.

In this situation new plenipotentiaries were commissioned, with such instructions as were thought best adapted to the actual posture of affairs, from London to Bruges, where they were met by the ambassadors of France[c]. The persons named in the commission were bishop Gilbert, who had been placed in the same situation by the usurping party of the preceding year, John lord Cobham, and two others. One motive for placing Gilbert at the head of the commission was probably to preserve an air of consistency and system on the English side in the negotiation; at the same time that it must be admitted as some argument of

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[c] Franc. 51 Edv. 3, m.

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the confidence reposed in this prelate by the king of Castille. Two nuncios from Rome still acted as mediators on the part of the pope, and were unfeignedly zealous in endeavouring to discover expedients by which a sincere amity might be established between the rival crowns. One proposition suggested by them, according to Froissart, was a treaty of marriage between the young prince Richard, now ten years old, and a daughter of Charles V, who was probably about the same age. This was so favourably received by both parties, that, the negotiation being broken off, a secret commission was appointed from both courts, to meet at Calais, to consult on the subject. The treaty failed however, on some demand made by the French court, from which they would not recede. Their offer is said to have been, the regular cession of a considerable territory in Aquitaine, by way of portion to the princess; and their demand, that the English should surrender Calais, and whatever else they held or pretended to in the north of France. Every idea however of resigning Calais was firmly rejected; and, the negotiators having stipulated a prolongation of the truce for a month only, a new and more solemn embassy was prepared, consisting, on the English part, of the bishop of St. David's lord chancellor, bishop Gilbert, the earl of Salisbury, and six others [d]. This embassy was equally ineffective with the preceding;

Proposal for the marriage of the prince of Wales.

[d] Rymer, 51 Edw. 3, Apr. 26. On the eleventh of January Adam Houghton bishop of St. David's had been appointed lord chancellor, and Henry Wakefield bishop of Worcester, lord treasurer of the realm; these high offices being thus restored to the clergy, after a proscription which had subsisted about six years.

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the truce was no further prolonged; and the two kingdoms were brought once again into a state of war. Such had probably, in contemplation of the approaching minority in England, been the uniform intention of the king of France.

Chaucer employed in this negotiation.

Many of the preceding particulars rest upon the authority of Froissart [e]. They are interesting to the biography of Chaucer, as, according to this historian, the intermediate commission for treating specially concerning the marriage of the prince of Wales consisted of three persons; sir Guichard Dangle, sir Richard Stan or Sturry, and Geoffrey Chaucer. Taking for granted the correctness of this representation, it supplies a very material incident in the life of the poet. If we consider the subject of the negotiation, no commission would in that age be construed as more honourable than that of obtaining a consort for the future king, nor is there any in which it is usual to be more scrupulously exact respecting the rank and personal importance of the negotiators. If we consider the character of the poet's fellow commissioners, this also will make his present appointment appear striking and observable. Sir Guichard Dangle in particular was at this time, whether in reputation of military services, or in eminent ability for affairs, and distinguished trust, one of the first persons in the court of London. When the Black Prince fixed his residence in Aquitaine, the two principal officers in his government were sir John Chandos constable, and sir Guichard Dangle marshal, of the duchy [f]. On the death

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[e] Vol I, Chap. cccxxv.

[f] Froissart, Vol. I, Chap. ccxvi.

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of sir Walter Manny sir Guichard was elected knight of the Garter in his room [g]; and at the accession of Richard II. he was created earl of Huntingdon, and appointed governor to the minor king [h].

Station occupied by him on this occasion.

The *Rotuli Franciæ* of the last year of Edward III, which contain the principal records in relation to transactions with that power, do not however operate in confirmation of the narrative of Froissart. The name of Chaucer occurs twice in them, he appearing in each instance to have obtained letters of protection from the king, as about to be employed abroad in the secret affairs of government. But his name in both cases stands single in the record; and the letters of protection are dated, in the first example on the twelfth of February [i], eight days prior to the earliest of the above embassies, and in the second on the twenty-eighth of April [k], two days subsequent to the latest. Neither of these records can be construed as applying to the intermediate embassy of which Froissart speaks. The name of sir Guichard Dangle occurs among the names of those appointed to the last and most solemn embassy.

In answer however to the want of countenance which the narrative of Froissart experiences from the records, it may be alleged, first, that his relation is characterised by that minuteness of detail which ordinarily accompanies the statement of a man acquainted with the facts he describes. Secondly, the narrative itself, as to the principal

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[g] Froissart, Chap. cccii. Barnes, Book IV, Chap. ix, §. 3.

[h] Rymer, 1 Ric. 2, Jul. 15. Froissart, Chap. cccxxvi.

[i] Appendix, No. [k] Ditto, No.

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point to which it relates, is attended with no improbability. The proposal of a marriage, for the purpose of terminating a difference between two adverse nations, sufficiently accords with the mode of the times we are considering. Lastly, the commission in which Chaucer is supposed to have been employed with sir Guichard Dangle and sir Richard Sturry, is stated by Froissart to have been secret; and this may be thought an adequate reason why no notice of it should occur in the authentic records of the period. There is a patent in Rymer, empowering certain persons to treat for this marriage, soon after the accession of Richard[l].

Wykeham restored.

Notwithstanding the inauspicious circumstances under which Wykeham was placed by the parliament of 1377, his disgrace did not continue long. His friends were powerful, and the king of Castille was placable. A session of the convocation of the church, as we have seen, was held about the same time with that of the parliament; and, immediately on their meeting, Courteney bishop of London noticed the absence of the bishop of Winchester, and moved that no subsidy should be granted to the king, till that prelate should appear in his place[m]. Most of the bishops, either from party-spirit, or as conceiving that the privileges of their order were wounded in him, concurred in the proposition; and it was urged with so much spirit that the government at last thought proper to comply. Shortly after, a negotiation was opened for the restitution of the temporalities, and on the eighteenth of June, three days before the death of Edward III, a writ was issued for

Death of Edward III.

[l] Tom. VII, 1 Ric. 2, Jan. 16.

[m] Parker, Cap. LVIII.

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that purpose, on condition of his paying to the king a certain sum of money for the service of the war[n]. His sureties on this occasion were the earls of March, Arundel and Warwic; and it is affirmed by the old historians that Alice Perrers was particularly instrumental in obtaining for him this composition[o]. Proud as the bishop was, he knew how to accommodate himself to the times, and to bow at the shrine of beauty when it became necessary to his more serious purposes.

His character.

The faults of Edward III. were the faults of his times; a love of magnificence, and a love of war. By the latter of these passions he produced a dreadful degree of misery, especially to the devoted country he invaded. To his mind the sentiment by which he was impelled appeared generous, elevated and pure, such as might have done honour to the noblest spirits. Yet in truth it was bloody, murderous and cruel. If Edward III. ever read the story of his own wars, if he ever heard of the barbarous and inhuman intestine scenes which followed upon the battle of Poitiers[p], he must have shuddered at the terrible consequences of the holiday passion he indulged, and have cast his laurels from him with impatience and loathing. His propensity was the propensity of a school-boy; its effects were those of the malignity of a demon.

Yet with this destructive and fatal bias, Edward III. joined, if not all the ability, and all the ardent good-

[n] Rymer, ad annum & diem.

[o] Ms. Harleian. No. 6217. Stow, ad ann. Parker, ubi supra.

[p] See Vol. I, Chap. XIX, p. 404.

will, that ever existed in a warrior, at least as few positive vices as were almost ever found in so eminent a station. He was a good husband, and an excellent father. He was kind to all; severe and truculent to none. His sentiments were always manly and generous; and so far as circumstances seemed to permit it, he was at all times equable, mild and humane. CHAP. XL. 1377.

A lover of learning.

These branches of the character of Edward III. have been already sufficiently known. The course of our enquiry has enabled us to add one more to the catalogue of his princely virtues. He was a lover of learning and learned men, and did not degenerate from the example of the Plantagenets who had gone before him, Henry II. and Edward I, in his patronage of literature and the arts. Not to mention the splendid style in which he finished St. Stephen's Chapel by a labour scarcely shorter in duration than his reign, the rebuilding of Windsor Castle, and the favour he displayed toward Wykeham, founded probably from the first upon his talent for the arts of design, he has been clearly shown to have been the original patron of Chaucer and Gower. To him therefore we are in a considerable degree indebted for the present structure of the English language, as well as for the genius, invention, and rich and diversified fancy, which, in various parts of their works, are displayed by these celebrated writers.

CHAP. XLI.

CORONATION OF RICHARD II.—RETIREMENT OF THE KING OF CASTILLE.—APPOINTED COMMANDER IN CHIEF.—SITUATION OF CHAUCER UNDER THE NEW REIGN.

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Accession of Richard II.

IMMEDIATELY on the death of his illustrious father, the king of Castille resolved upon that system of conduct which he uniformly pursued for the rest of his life. His first object was to place his nephew securely upon the throne, and to remove, as far as possible, those circumstances which might throw difficulty in the way of his youthful government. The age of the prince was ten years and about six months; his person and countenance were, both at this time and afterward, singularly beautiful and prepossessing; and the love with which the whole nation regarded the memory of his father, afforded him the happiest omen of a prosperous reign.

Proceedings of the king of Castille.

The first care of the king of Castille was to reconcile himself to the city of London. This scene was contrived to be played in the presence of the new sovereign: a message was dispatched to the mayor and citizens, expressing the desire of the king that his uncle and his good

subjects of the metropolis should be in harmony, and that for this purpose certain of the magistrates should repair to cc· rt; Richard represented the character of the mediator; and, after a parley, John of Gaunt conferred the kiss of peace upon each of the persons composing the city deputation[a]. This conciliatory measure was followed by the release of sir Peter Delamare from his confinement, and the grant of an ample and unlimited pardon under the privy seal to the bishop of Winchester[b].

Coronation.

The king of Castille next undertook the business of the royal coronation. It was celebrated on the twenty-fifth day from the demise of the crown; and, notwithstanding this expedition, it has been remarked as perhaps the most magnificent which occurs in our history. A council being summoned for the purpose, John of Gaunt made his appearance before them, and claimed, as earl of Leicester, to officiate as seneschal, or high steward, of England at the approaching solemnity; as duke of Lancaster, to bear in procession, by himself or his deputy, the principal sword, called *Curtana*; and as earl of Lincoln, to carve the meat at the king's table[c]. These claims having been admitted, he in the character of seneschal, held a court of claims to adjust the similar pretensions of the nobility and gentry who, according to the modes of the feudal system, demanded in right of their fiefs to perform different menial services on the ensuing occasion[c]. John of Gaunt, as seneschal, and lord Percy (on this occasion created earl of

[a] Walsingham and Stow, ad ann.

[b] Rymer, Tom. VII, 1 Ric. 2, Jul. 30, 31.

[c] Appendix, No.

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Northumberland), as earl marshal, conducted the procession, as it moved from the Tower to Westminster Hall; and it was remarked that they demeaned themselves with the utmost graciousness and courtesy to the citizens and spectators, very differently from the insolence which they adopted, or more probably which had been imputed to them, at the late convocation at St. Paul's [d]. After the solemnity was concluded, the king of Castille delivered in the particulars of the festival in writing to the chancery, in order to their being duly enrolled [e].

Retirement of the king of Castille.

Thus far John of Gaunt appears to have taken the whole of the concerns of government upon himself; and no one attempted to control him, or to dispute the propriety of his conduct. The business of the coronation however was no sooner finished, than he appeared before the king in council, and demanded leave to retire to his castle of Kenelworth, declaring his resolution to have no share in the future government. Meanwhile he added, that he should at all times be ready, whenever the king thought proper to send for him, to undertake any service of which he was capable for his sovereign and country [d]. The earl of Northumberland also resigned his staff of marshal of England.

Motives upon which it was founded.

The views by which the king of Castille was actuated on this occasion are easily conceived. He was the person to whom, according to the rules of perhaps every monarchy in Europe, the regency, during the minority of the young king, ought to have devolved. He was versed in affairs,

[d] Walsingham, ad ann. [e] Rymer, ubi supra, Jul. 15.

a prince of great opulence, of considerable ability, and whose personal interference might be expected to have much weight and importance. It was natural to suppose that the administration of government would be stronger, more able to inspire foreign powers with respect, to keep down the turbulence of an untamed aristocracy, and to deliver the functions of the monarchy unimpaired to the young king hereafter, by being placed in the hands of John of Gaunt, than by being disposed of in any other way. CHAP. XLI. 1377.

On the other hand every kind of base and malignant artifice had been employed to fix upon him a general odium and aversion. He had been represented as a person of the haughtiest nature and the most despotic principles of conduct, dark, insidious and crafty, boundless in ambition, and unscrupulous in his choice of means for gratifying it. He was accused of aspiring to the crown, and poison was familiarly mentioned as one of his expedients for that end. He unquestionably was a man of quick and tempestuous passions, and by yielding to their vehemence had made himself many enemies. Several of the old nobility, and several enterprising adventurers in the science of government, conceived that they should be proscribed, and their views rendered abortive, under the sagacious and dignified government of the king of Castille. The whole church establishment was rendered hostile to him by his patronage of the person and doctrines of Wicliffe. Libels against him had been disseminated with unsparing industry; and, whatever were his real merits, a multitude of his countrymen were at this time persuaded to regard him as prone to irritation at the most trivial offences, and brutal in his resentments. His enemies numerous.

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Disadvantages he must have encountered as regent.

Advantageousness of his situation as a private individual.

with regard to public benefit.

It might be supposed to be doubtful, whether, pursued by all this misrepresentation, and thus rendered obnoxious to his countrymen, his government would be successful; and still more whether he was bound, in justice to his nephew and his native isle, to make the experiment. As a private person, it would not be doubted that he was the first in the kingdom; he was a man of a liberal mind, of just principles, of uncommon talents and experience. So circumstanced, and so endowed, his occasional interference on momentous occurrences could not fail to have great weight; his very presence and inspection, though not within the verge of the court, would check the excesses of the ambitious; and the motives of his conduct, he thought, could not be misinterpreted. Might he not be of more use to his country, appearing thus as a bystander, than if he took the reins of government into his own hands?

and to his private interest.

As to his private interest in the case, this would not admit of a question. He had long enough managed the affairs of the nation, for this object to have lost the charms of novelty in his eyes. He had now an honourable occasion afforded him to retire. If he assumed the office which fell to him as it were by the right of his birth, he must expect to occupy an uneasy and precarious situation: He would be pursued with malignity and misrepresentation; his purest services misconstrued; a thousand cabals and conspiracies formed against him; the rising power of the popular branch of the government employed for his ruin; and perhaps the constitution of his country wounded for the sake of injuring him. As a retired individual, he had every means of gratification, of dignity, and of public importance. His wealth was unrivalled, his mind

was stored with various knowledge, and he was surrounded by friends, zealous in their attachment, of the greatest eminence, and the most distinguished talents. Who would not prefer such a retirement, to the functions of a regency, difficult at the best, and peculiarly inauspicious under the circumstances of his country?

His loyalty and attachment to Richard.

Thus it was then that John of Gaunt formed to himself a system of political conduct, from the commencement of his nephew's reign, which distinguishes him perhaps from every other conspicuous character that flourished during that turbulent period. He resolved to accept no place in the council of regency, and no share in the actual administration of public affairs. Yet the sentiment of his life was loyalty, an affectionate and unalterable attachment to the youth who had been bequeathed to his protection by his illustrious father and brother, and whom the course of descent had placed in the station of first magistrate of his native country. Perhaps he carried this principle to excess, particularly in the last years of Richard, when he allowed his name and countenance to be employed to sanction the king's bloody revenge against his junior uncle, Thomas of Woodstock, and the partisans who adhered to him. In every vicissitude of public affairs, in every shock of the rude and furious parties which were engendered in this period, he was to be found in his proper station, a supporter of the throne; and, if any thing bold and criminal was attempted against the unhappy sovereign, the perpetrators chose their occasion for that purpose, when John of Gaunt was absent from the realm.

His retirement condemned.

It must be admitted however that he was deficient in energy of character. His natural qualifications and circum-

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stances were precisely those of the man who should have saved his nephew from the calamities of his reign, from the corruption of flatterers and the animosity of relentless foes; and his abilities were sufficient for that purpose. If Richard II. perished miserably at the early age of twenty-two, this must in part be imputed to the king of Castille. The calumnies of his enemies he should have despised; he might have lived so as to render them pointless and contemptible. He did not use, as he might have done, for the prosperity of England the advantages which nature and fortune put into his hands. His temper was too mild; it did not qualify him to stand up with sufficient fortitude and proud indifference, against the assaults of adversaries, and the obstacles which were industriously thrown in his course. He was for a moment fierce, animated and resentful; but this state of mind did not continue. It was a feeling more of soreness from caluminiated truth, than of firm and strenuous resistance from unassailable rectitude.

Council of regency.

John of Gaunt having retired, a council of regency was appointed five days after the coronation, consisting of the earl of March, the bishop of London, lord Latimer, and nine others[f]. Edmund of Langley earl of Cambridge, and Thomas of Woodstock now created earl of Buckingham, brothers of the king of Castille, by whom he was entirely loved, imitated his conduct, and withdrew from all share in the administration. It seems to have been judged reasonable and decent not to include the bishop of Winchester in the king's continual council.

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[f] Rymer, ubi supra, Jul. 20.

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1377. Parliament. Second council of regency.

Richard's first parliament met on the thirteenth of October[h]; and their proceedings tend strongly to confirm the wisdom and propriety of the king of Castille's conduct in the part he had chosen. The house of commons immediately elected sir Peter Delamare, the leader of the factious and indecent measures of the preceding year, to be their speaker. They revived the prosecution against Alice Perrers, and pronounced sentence upon her of banishment and confiscation. In the following year however this lady became the wife of lord Windsor, and obtained from parliament a reversal of the proceedings against her. The house of commons also petitioned the other branch of the legislature, to appoint certain persons of divers classes, able, diligent and careful, to be of the king's continual council, and to act jointly with the great officers of state. The former committee of regency was accordingly superseded, and sixteen counsellors appointed in their stead, comprising for the most part the same persons, with the omission of lord Latimer, but including several of the zealous partisans of the king of Castille. The session of parliament closed after a duration of five weeks.

War.

It has already been mentioned that the truce between England and France expired on the first of May. The new reign therefore commenced in a state of war. The great object of contention between the two countries appears to have been Calais. Charles V. looked with an observing eye upon the state of his neighbour kingdom; he was well informed of its intestine divisions and

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h Cotton, 1 Ric. 2.

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weakness. He thought the commencement of the reign of a minor sovereign, a minority committed for the most part to the experiments of an audacious faction, afforded him every advantage for gaining this important post; and he determined to spare no effort to avail himself of it. Accordingly a considerable fleet was fitted out immediately on the expiration of the truce; and the coasts of Kent, Sussex and Hampshire were invaded, insulted and ravaged, in the first weeks of the new reign[i]. At the same time the Scots were put in motion by his intrigues, and committed divers outrages upon the borders of England[k].

1378. King of Castille commander in chief.

The regency thought this an occasion of sufficient emergency to call for the interference of the king of Castille. Whatever aspersions were propagated against him in a civil capacity, all men looked up to him as the most eminent military commander their country had to boast. He was accordingly appointed the king's lieutenant and captain general for the dominions of France, with full powers of superintendence, as well relative to civil administration, as to the military expeditions which might be fitted out against that country[l]. Walsingham says, that the regency confided to him the subsidies which had been voted for the prosecution of the war; but this is sufficiently contradicted by the circumstance that the parliament of the following year having questioned the proper application of the supplies, were referred by

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[i] Rymer, Jun. 30; Jul. 2, 7. [k] Walsingham, ad ann.

[l] Froissart, Tom. I, Chap. cccxxix. A commission to John of Gaunt, probably the counterpart of this, may be found in Rymer, 3 Ric. 2, Sep. 12.

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the executive government to John Philpot and William Walworth, receivers whom the parliament had appointed, for satisfaction [m].

Cherburgh and Brest placed in the hands of the English.

If England at this time laboured under some disadvantages, France was exposed to evils of scarcely inferior magnitude. It had been her internal divisions which had laid the foundation for the victories of Edward III. That kingdom was distributed into a number of fiefs, of such extent as to enable the holders of them almost individually to bid defiance to the single power of the crown. The sovereign of the whole country could no otherwise maintain his ascendancy, than by negotiating and temporising with the discordant passions and desires of his vassals. Two of these vassals had been especially aiding and confederate to the views of Edward III; the king of Navarre, who had a considerable part of Normandy under his dominion, and John de Montfort duke of Britanny. These potent lords had each of them been nearly stripped of their feudal dominions by the fortune of the war, and their miscarriages operated to prolong their fidelity to the English standard. The king of Navarre now put into our hands for a limited term the fortress of Cherburgh [n], and the duke of Britanny the harbour of Brest [o], with the added condition in the latter instance, that, if the duke previously to the expiration of the term died without issue, the fortress was to revert in perpetuity to the crown of England. John of Gaunt was probably the negotiator of these cessions; and his first

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[m] Cotton, 2 Ric. 2.

[n] Rymer, 2 Ric. 2, Aug. 1.

[o] Ditto, 1 Ric. 2, Apr. 5.

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office as commander in chief, was to enter into secure possession of them. Having for this purpose sailed to the coast of Britanny, he endeavoured to avail himself of the occasion to obtain for De Montfort some part of his dukedom, and with this view sat down before the town of St. Maloes. But he was compelled by the constable Du Guesclin, after an obstinate struggle, to raise the siege, and retire [p]. The successes of the campaign therefore, exclusively of the cruises of different squadrons of the fleet under his command, which took a considerable number of the enemy's vessels destined for the annoyance of our coasts [q], were principally confined to the acquisition of the two fortresses abovementioned, an acquisition liable to be regarded in opposite points of view. They afforded a most convenient entrance into France, and in this way seemed to add splendour to the national character, as well as to be of considerable advantage in the further prosecution of the war. But on the other hand, in the present state of England, the further prosecution of the war was not desirable: it had ceased to be pregnant with such striking events as those of Cressy and Poitiers, and was degenerating into a war of depredation; and the finances of the European governments at this time were wholly inadequate to the burthen of maintaining so many insulated fortresses as we now possessed on the adversary's coast.

Chaucer re-appointed comptroller of the customs.

Notwithstanding the resolution formed by the king of Castille, of not contending for the regency during the minority of his nephew, nor taking any share in the

[p] Froissart, Tom. II, Chap. 21.

[q] Walsingham, ad ann.

administration of the civil government, he did not on that account neglect the interest of his friends and dependents. Chaucer in particular experienced the sincerity of John of Gaunt's attachment in this point. The conduct of affairs, as we have seen, was entirely in the hands of this prince during the first weeks of the new reign; and the renewal of the grant to Chaucer of the office of comptroller of the customs is dated on the day after that on which Edward III. expired [r]. His pension also was renewed under the new king; and he at the same time received a grant to a similar amount (twenty marks *per annum*) in compensation of the patent of Edward III, entitling him to a pitcher of wine daily, to be received in the port of London [s]. It is observable that these last provisions in favour of Chaucer are dated in March and April of the present year, that is, immediately after his patron having accepted the office of lieutenant for conducting the war in France.

His pensions.

Justice demands that we should once more notice in this place the forgeries of the article of Chaucer in the Biographia Britannica. The author of this article notices the two grants last mentioned, and refers as his authority respecting them to "Pat. 1 R. II, p. 13," and "Pat. 1 R. II, p. 19." There are no such rolls. The terms, "part the thirteenth," and "part the nineteenth," are absurd to any person accustomed to consult the records in the Tower. The record of the patents of any one year sometimes consists of a single roll, frequently of two rolls,

Falsifications of the Biographia Britannica.

[r] Appendix, No.

[s] Appendix, No.

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which in that case are indorsed. Parts I. and II, and I believe never exceed three. The grants to Chaucer of the present year are first mentioned by the author of the Life prefixed to Urry's Edition; but the biographer does not specify the source from which he drew his information. There is in fact no record existing relative to them, or none which has yet been brought to light, except the patent of the eleventh year of Richard II. in which they are pretty fully recited[t], permitting Chaucer to resign these grants in favour of another. This patent is imperfectly printed in a subsequent page of the Life in Urry's Edition. But the writer of the article in the Biographia did not exactly understand this. Finding no official references in the book from which he drew his information, he has thought proper to invent references of his own, thus giving his essay an appearance of accuracy to the casual reader, exciting disapprobation and contempt in the elaborate and informed, and poisoning, to the extent of his power, the fountains of historical knowledge, and the confidence which every reasonable man would desire to repose in the integrity of history.

Supposed grant of protection to Chaucer.

Mr. Speght has included in his account of the official minutes of this period relative to Chaucer, that "in the second yeare of Richard the second, The King tooke Geffrey Chaucer and his lands into his protection[u];" upon which statement he reasons in the following manner: "It is in record that twice or thrice he was employed in foraine countries: which if it be true, wel might the man

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[t] Appendix, No.

[u] Edition, 1597: Life of Chaucer; his rewards.

be at such charges and expences, as he might stand in need of king Richard the seconds protection till he had better recouered himselfe [a]." Upon this argument of Mr. Speght, the coadjutor of Urry sagaciously remarks, that "it seems less probable that he expended most of his wealth in foreign embassies, than that they were the means whereby he acquired it;" thus adopting the incident affirmed by Mr. Speght, at the same time that he leaves this alleged embarrassment of Chaucer without a cause. The author of the article of Chaucer in the Biographia Britannica concludes from the whole, that Chaucer on the accession of Richard II. lost his place of comptroller of the customs; the contrary of which we have just shown from the records.

Mr. Speght is a writer of a very different class from the author of Chaucer's article in the Biographia, and is entitled to a very different treatment from every candid enquirer. His information is almost always sound, though his references are not accurate. We are indebted to him for much valuable information respecting our poet; and, in many instances where his authority has been disputed, investigation has conspicuously tended to confirm it. There is not the slightest reason to impute to him, as to his modern successor, an intention to mislead. Yet on the other hand no such protection is on record as that which he describes; nor is it probable that Chaucer's circumstances were such in the second year of Richard, as to make the king's writ to protect him from his creditors

[a] Edition, 1597: Life of Chaucer: his service.

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in any way necessary. The materials of Speght's Life of Chaucer seem to have been furnished to him by another; perhaps by Robert Glover, who supplied him with the tree of Chaucer's genealogy. The solution therefore of the difficulty we are here considering is likely to be, that the minutes from which Speght wrote contained a reference to the patent of protection to Chaucer, 21 Ric. 2[y], of which there is no notice in Speght; and that he, either from carelessness of inspection, or the imperfectness of the hand-writing before him, observed only the former of the two figures representing the year of the king's reign.

[y] Appendix, No.

CHAP. XLII.

POEM OF CHAUCER, ENTITLED THE COMPLAINT OF THE BLACK KNIGHT.

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WE have seen the manner in which the character of the king of Castille was treated by his political competitors. It was in vain that he withdrew from all rivalship with them in the cabinet; this by no means tamed the violence of their assaults. The ecclesiastical members of this cabal feared and hated him for his patronage of Wicliffe; and the whole party were impressed with the feeling that, if he once became popular, their power would be to the last degree precarious.

The king of Castille complains of the commons.

The minute particulars of the scandals invented against him it is impossible for us to trace. Immediately on the meeting of the parliament of the preceding autumn, the commons, according to a mode very frequent at this time with that branch of the legislature, required to have certain lords, whom they named, to confer with them upon public affairs; and, at the head of the list which they formed, appeared the name of the king of Castille. When this list was presented in the upper house, the king of Castille rose, and desired to be exempted from the nomination; assigning as

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the reason of his request, that the commons had slandered him in manner of treason [a]. It is not easy to say to what particular measure this complaint alludes; but the complaint itself sufficiently evinces the ill blood which existed between the parties. The lower house apologised, and undertook to justify themselves from the imputation, and the difference was quieted; but the hostile feelings from which it had proceeded still remained.

Affair of Hawley and Shakel.

An unfortunate affair occurred while John of Gaunt was absent in the campaign of Britanny, which, in the present state of the public mind, was extremely injurious to his character and his fame. One of the prisoners made in the battle of the Black Prince at Najara, was the count of Denia, a Spanish nobleman. Prisoners, according to the rules of war at this time established, became the property of the persons to whom they had surrendered their swords, who were accustomed to look forward to the benefit to accrue to them from the payment of the ransom. The names of the captors in the present case were Robert Hawley and John Shakel. After some negotiation, the count was set at large, and suffered to proceed to Spain to procure the sum which had been agreed upon, his son remaining a hostage for the discharge of his engagements. Difficulties probably arose to the father, more than he had foreseen, in raising the amount of his ransom; the whole question was suspended or neglected; and the young nobleman resided for several years in England.

The affair was in this situation, when John of Gaunt

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[a] Cotton, 1 Ric. 2.

was induced to advance a claim, as king of Castille, that this young gentleman, being his subject, should be placed at his disposal. We know not whether this was done by him for the sake of consistency, as pretending to the Spanish crown; or whether he thought that, by the favour and attention he purposed to show to the noble prisoner, he should gain somewhat toward creating to himself a party in the kingdom, the throne of which he claimed. It would be inconsistent with his whole character, if we should conceive him to have been actuated by sordid motives: it would be dishonourable to him, if we should suppose he did not pledge himself that the captors, by complying with his demand, should sustain no loss in the matter of the ransom. Perhaps they were engaged in the political party which was so industrious in its hostility to John of Gaunt; perhaps they were persuaded to thwart him, by some of the powerful leaders of this party. Whatever was their motive, they obstinately refused to comply; and, the royal authority having been in vain employed to overcome their resistance, they were committed to the Tower for contempt. During the campaign of John of Gaunt in France, they found means to escape from their confinement, and to take sanctuary in the church of Westminster Abbey. The place of their retreat being known, sir Allan Buxhal, constable of the Tower, together with lord Latimer and sir Ralph Ferrers, felt prompted by their attachment to John of Gaunt, to proceed to the abbey with a sufficient body of armed men for the purpose of taking away the fugitives by force. The same obstinacy displayed itself on their part in this as in the former instance. They resisted; the attack was made upon them

CHAP. XLII. 1378. near the great altar at the period of high mass; and Hawley, with one of the monks of the convent, was killed in the affray [b].

The story here related is rendered interesting to us by the circumstance that the young count of Denia, either as resisting the title of John of Gaunt to the Spanish crown, or from a high sense of fidelity to the persons to whom he had been delivered as a hostage, had condescended to disguise himself as a menial servant, and attend upon his captors in their hiding-place. It was in another sense that it was regarded as interesting in the times when the incident occurred. The violation of a consecrated sanctuary was viewed as one of the greatest enormities; the circumstances attending the present sacrilege were uncommonly atrocious and aggravated; and the king was obliged to consent to found a chantry of five priests, to pray for the souls of Hawley and his servant. Courteney bishop of London seized the occasion, every Sunday, Wednesday and Friday for many weeks after, to recite in his cathedral a sentence of excommunication against all persons concerned in, or accessary to, the crime, with an exception by name, of the king, the princess his mother, and his uncle the king of Castille. This proceeding was of course particularly invidious and obnoxious. John of Gaunt having returned from the continent, an order was sent from court to the bishop to desist; but it was disregarded: he was then summoned to give an account of his conduct before the council at Windsor; but he refused to obey [c].

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[b] Cotton and Walsingham, ad ann.

[c] Walsingham, ubi supra.

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1378. Statute of *Scandalum Magnatum.*

A parliament met at Gloucester in the autumn of the present year. From what passed in this assembly it may be inferred that the friends of the king of Castille were more powerful here than in the first parliament of Richard. The chancellor in the speech with which he opened the session, among the different objects which he pressed upon their attention, recommended that they should make provision for the more effectual suppression of false rumours and slanders against persons in high station whether in church or state. The consequence of this recommendation was the passing the celebrated statute of *Scandalum Magnatum*, by which it is particularly provided that persons propagating such rumours shall be committed to prison, there to remain till they have produced him with whom the slander originated[d]. This statute is understood to have been framed to conciliate the king of Castille; and, in the ignorance which as yet existed respecting the true principles of policy with regard to toleration and the freedom of speech and of writing, it does not merit to be considered as an indication of any illiberal propensity in his mind, if he were persuaded to regard the measure with complacency.

Unpopularity and misfortunes of the king of Castille.

The misrepresentations uttered against John of Gaunt went on in uninterrupted progress, till they not only interfered with his public usefulness, but involved him in the most serious evils and dangers both as to property and life. It was owing to this cause that his palace of the Savoy was demolished in the insurrection of 1381,

[d] Statutes at Large: 2 Ric. 2, Stat. 1, cap. 5.

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his family obliged to fly with the utmost precipitation, and himself to take refuge in Scotland, with the government of which he had just concluded a truce. It was owing to this cause that, when his nephew had assumed the reins of government, a conspiracy was formed by a set of unprincipled courtiers, to which Richard appears to have lent his support, to bring him to a public and ignominious trial, on an accusation of having contrived to destroy the king, and to usurp the crown.

Complaint of the Black Knight.

I have been inclined to imagine that Chaucer's poem, entitled the Complaint of the Black Knight, was written on occasion of the atrocious aspersions endured by John of Gaunt, and intended as a vindication of his untainted loyalty. The idea must be allowed to be vague, and incapable of being sustained by any demonstrative argument: yet it may not, whatever may be the ultimate decision of the question, prove an unamusing speculation, or unillustrative of the history and political state of England at this time, to consider the presumptions by which a certain degree of probability may be given to this construction of the poem.

The author of the Life of Chaucer prefixed to Urry's edition mentions its having been conjectured that the Complaint of the Black Knight was written for John of Gaunt during his courtship of the princess Blanche. Mr. Tyrwhit has also concurred in this suggestion [e].

connected with the history of John of Gaunt.

There are several reasons that may persuade us that John of Gaunt is the hero of this poem. The scene is

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[e] Preface, Appendix C, note e.

laid in Woodstock Park. We have the same expression defining the scene here, as in the Parliament of Birds.

—At the last I founde a little weie
Toward a parke, enclosed with a wall,
In compace rounde; and by a gaté small
Who so that would he frelie mighten gone
Into this parke *ywalled with grene stone:*

ver. 38.

a circumstance which we may suppose employed to indicate that the person here spoken of by the appellation of the Black Knight, was a member of the royal family.

The hero appears to have been a warrior. Enumerating his merits, all of which had been requited with ingratitude, the poet says,

Peril of dethe, neither in se ne lande,
Hunger ne thurst, sorowe ne sykénesse,
Ne gret [f] emprises for to take on hand,
Sheding of blode, ne manful hardinesse,
Ne ofte wounding at [g] sautés by distresse,—
Al is for nought.

ver. 415.

Again,

He was in sothe, without exepcion,
To speke of manhode, one the best [h] on live,—
For of his time, and of his age also,
He proved was, [i] there men shuld have ado.

ver. 158.

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[f] undertakings, adventures. [g] assaults. [h] alive.
[i] in scenes of public and honourable action.

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The next line, in which he is spoken of as "One of the best [k] therto of brede and length," may be supposed expressly to allude to the person and stature of John of Gaunt.

not related to his courtship of the princess Blanche.

But, though John of Gaunt be the hero of the poem, there seems to be no plausibility in the supposition that it relates to his courtship with the princess Blanche. The patron of Chaucer, as we have seen, was little more than nineteen years of age at the period of his marriage with Blanche. To say nothing of the absurdity of setting forth, as is here done, the testimonies of his military achievements, on the conception that he was still a stripling; this can scarcely be reconciled with such phrases as the following:

> For I lov'd one ful longé [l] sythe agone,
>
> ver. 917.

and

> Til at the last the woful man arose
> And to a lodge ywent there close beside,
> Where al the May his custome was t'abide,
> Sole to complainé of his painés kene
> From yere to yere.
>
> ver. 587.

These expressions are employed to describe the length of the hero's courtship. From the poems certainly written upon the loves of John of Gaunt and the princess Blanche, we learn indeed that their courtship continued for twelve

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[k] besides in size and stature. [l] time.

months. But it is not very natural to introduce a youthful prince of nineteen bewailing the years of hopeless love which he had passed.

Add to this, that the principal topic of the poem is the unworthy and atrocious slanders which the hero had endured, and which operated to shut him out from the favour of his mistress. We know of no slanders to which John of Gaunt was exposed in his boyish years. And it is a little too much, gratuitously to assume a catalogue of this sort producing so distinguished an effect, merely for the sake of forcing the application of a poem to an event with which it will not naturally accord.

Literal subject of the poem.

The subject of the Complaint of the Black Knight, stated without mystery or ambiguity, is the misfortune of a true lover, who has been unjustly aspersed to his mistress, and, she giving ear to his accusers, is driven to despair. It is undoubtedly foreign to the ideas of modern criticism, to imagine that a political allusion lies concealed under this garb. But, if we would justly comment upon the production of a distant age, we must transport ourselves in fancy to the period in which it was written, and bear in mind the tastes and partialities which then prevailed.

Taste for allegorical writing.

In the time of Chaucer almost every thing was allegory. Did the poet aim at describing the hazards and pains of love? He took for his nominal subject the plucking of a rose [m]. Did he describe the courtship of two distinguished lovers? The lady was an eagle, and the prince who ad-

[m] Romaunt of the Rose.

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dressed her became a male of the same species[n]. Did he pen an epithalamium upon a royal marriage? He feigned a romantic tale of the gathering of apples, of a ship that would extend itself to any dimensions, of birds bearing miraculous seeds in their beaks, and of a lover and a lady who died, only that they might be surprisingly restored to life and happiness[o]. Other instances of a similar sort will occur in our further developement of Chaucer's works.

Passion of love and sentiment of loyalty compared.

The principles of loyalty and of love, as understood in the remoter ages of Europe, were extremely similar. Love, as has already been mentioned, was a species of worship. In the language of an eloquent writer of our own times, it was a "proud submission, a dignified obedience, a subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom[p]." The knight viewed his mistress as belonging to an other order of beings. He never questioned her resolutions; or thought of contesting the propriety of her conduct. No severity on her part fatigued, and no caprice revolted him; he asked for her heart; and, unless he found reason to believe that his assiduities were hateful to her, he persisted in his courtship, and never conceived himself entitled to precipitate her determination. She was the deity he adored; she was the religion for which he fought and was ready to spill the last drop of his blood; her safety he was to watch over with exhaustless vigilance, her injuries to avenge,

Love considered on the principles of chivalry.

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[n] Parliament of Birds. [o] Chaucer's Dream.

[p] Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France.

and her reputation, whether for beauty or for honour, to assert and defend.

The great merit of the system of chivalry lay in a judicious employment of the passions of humility and pride. The lover was humble in the presence of his mistress, and did not allow himself to have a will disjoined from hers; he was humble at the moment of his highest good-fortune and success, for he attributed every thing to her grace, and nothing to his own merit. On the other hand, he was never at a loss for materials to nourish his pride. He was proud of his constant services, his unalterable patience, his unconditional submission; all those things which, superficially considered, were the most incompatible with the character of a knight and a soldier, became gratifying to his heart, on account of the passion they spoke, and the object to which they were paid.

Description of loyalty.

Loyalty was a sentiment in a striking degree parallel to love. If the object of loyalty possessed qualities worthy of the sentiment, this to a true son of chivalry heightened the passion; if it did not possess these qualities, he was proud to feel that he cultivated the virtue for itself, and wanted no extrinsic excitement. The man entertaining this sentiment, would gladly counsel, and thus promote the happiness of, his sovereign; but he did not assume to control him. He looked upon him as the delegate of an overruling Providence, and on that account as sacred. No injuries could dissolve the solemn tie; and, if treated in the most brutal, or the most iniquitous manner, the true loyalist placed his pride in endurance, and in thus showing that the public feeling was with him superior to every private consideration. The sovereign was the mysterious link by

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which the machine of human society was held together: all order, all security, the infinite portions of private virtue and unostentatious happiness dispersed in the unnoticed haunts of the community, depended upon his preservation: if the sacredness of his character were violated, every thing was thrown into confusion, and anarchy and violence and bloodshed universally reigned. The loyalist therefore, like the lover, placed his honour in the fidelity and entireness of his service, and thought no pollution he could incur of so deep and inexpiable a dye, as conspiracy or rebellion [q].

The loyalty here spoken of was in the feudal times not without its limits. In these times there was much of the generous spirit of freedom, and of the rugged temper of independence. The feudal barons felt themselves little sovereigns, each in his bounded sphere, and did not hesitate on many occasions to hold a peremptory language to their chief. This was not however the primitive genius of the feudal system. Fiefs were originally granted for a short term, and the tenant was considered merely as a steward cultivating his portion of land for the benefit of his lord. Every memorial was carefully employed to keep alive in his recollection his dependent and subordinate situation. Such was the primary idea of fines and reliefs; such was the homage that he vowed on his bended knees; and such the menial services, the performance of which was usually

[q] The sublime spirit of an entire loyalty and non-resisting submission is admirably delineated in several of the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, and particularly in the tragedy of Valentinian.

annexed as a condition or quit-rent to a fief. They were the services not of meanness, but implying a certain merit and rank in him who paid them; not of constraint, but affection. When the loyal and chivalrous spirit languished in the immediate tenants of the crown, it still continued undiminished in various classes of society. The villains, or unprivileged cultivators of the land, on the estate of a feudal baron, were ordinarily inspired with a passive sentiment of obedience and unbounded devotion to their chief. Still more the retainers, or immediate free-born attendants of the lord, continued to be animated with all the enthusiasm of attachment. This attachment was regularly to be found in persons of this class, from the retainers of him who held the most trivial fief, to those of the sovereign himself. They were frequently educated under his roof; they were fed at his board; and often the blood of their master flowed in their veins. John of Gaunt was inspired with this species of loyalty for Richard II: the affection of an uncle and a protector mixed itself with that of a subject and a servant; he felt for his illustrious family, for Edward III. and the Black Prince; he felt for the tranquillity and the character of his country; and all these sentiments impressing him at once, produced the conviction that, among the various principles of his public life, none should contend with, or presume to control, his loyalty for the inexperienced years of his kinsman and sovereign.

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The allegory which we have supposed Chaucer to have chosen in this instance, was rendered the more appropriate from the peculiar circumstances of the case. Richard II. had reigned nearly ten years, before he was twenty years of age. The features and complexion of a blooming youth have a

Youth,

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striking similitude to the charms and graces of the softer sex. The mature man feels the same ascendancy of corporeal and intellectual strength in the one case as in the other; a sentiment which, however varnished over and delicately kept from sight, is one of the most prevailing causes of that species of deference which the lover is accustomed to pay to his mistress. The youth has a claim upon us for the same forbearance and protection as the lady. He is to be defended from the rude blasts of the world, and not carelessly to be exposed to those hazards and difficulties which form the wholsome discipline of the man of riper age. If to this general catalogue of particular circumstances we add the sacredness which all communities acknowledge in the person of their first magistrate, we shall perceive the deference to be paid to the youthful king heightened to something of much the same nature as that which the knight of ancient times paid to his mistress. John of Gaunt, who devoted himself for the welfare of his royal nephew, felt for him the same tenderness, the same anxiety, the same considerate forbearance of a stronger toward a frailer nature, as belong to the passion of love in its state of greatest purity and refinement.

and sacred character of Richard II.

His beautiful person and prepossessing manners.

There was one further circumstance in the case of Richard which gave to the form of allegory here employed perhaps a peculiar fitness in the conception of Chaucer. This prince is universally described to us as one of the most beautiful youths that was ever beheld; and from the portrait of him still existing in Westminster Abbey, however imperfect was the art of painting in that age, connoisseurs have inferred that his person was admirably formed, and

his features cast in a mould of the most perfect symmetry. His appearance and manner were highly pleasing; and it was difficult for any one to approach him without being prepossessed in his favour. The eulogium therefore which Chaucer inserts in this poem as of a mistress, might with scarcely any modification be applicable to the sovereign:

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For bounté, beauté, shape, and [r] semelihede,
For prudence, wit, and passingly fairenesse,
For benigne porte, glad chere, with [s] lowlyhede.
ver. 499.

Ardent and unalterable attachment of the Black Knight.

The principal part of the poem consists of the soliloquy of its hero, who bewails his misfortune in having lost the favour of the person he loved, through the malice of slanderous tongues. The soliloquy is interspersed with the strongest professions of his fidelity and inviolable attachment to the object he adores. Thus in a passage already referred to:

For I lov'd one ful longé [t] sythe agone
With all mine herte and body and ful might,
And, [u] to be ded, my herté can not gone
From his beheste, [x] but hold that he hath hight;
Though I be banished out of her sight,
And by her mouth [y] dampned that I shall dey,
To my beheste yet I wil [z] er obey.
ver. 317.

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[r] seemliness, comeliness. [s] lowliness, modesty. [t] time.
[u] though I should die for it.
[x] so as not to hold (perform) what it has promised. [y] condemned.
[z] ever, always.

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And again, in the conclusion of the soliloquy:

For her againest shal I never strive
In worde ne werké, plainly I ne may,
For [a] lever I have [b] then to be alyve
To dye sothly, [c] and it be to her [d] paye,
Ye though it shuldé be this samé day;
Or whan that ever her lyste to devise;
Sufficeth me to die in your servise.

And God! (that know'st the thought of every wight,
Right as it is, in every thing maist se)
Yet, er I die, with al my fullé myght
Lowly I pray, to graunten unto me,
That ye, lady, godely, faire, freshe and fre,
Which onely [e] sle me for [f] defaute of routhe,
[g] Or that I dyén, ye may knowe my trouthe.

For that in sothe [h] inow suffiseth me,
[c] And she it know in every circumstaunce,
And after I am wel [i] apaide that she,
If that her lyst, of deth [k] to do vengeaunce
Unto me that am under her lygeaunce;
It [l] site me not her dome to disobeye,
But at her [m] luste fulle wilfully to deye:

Withouten grutchinge or rebellion
In wil or wordés, wholy I assente,
Or any maner contradiction,

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[a] rather. [b] than. [c] if. [d] satisfaction. [e] slay.
[f] want of compassion, gentleness. [g] Ere. [h] enow, enough. [i] content.
[k] This particle is superfluous, and has probably crept into the text. Chaucer perhaps considered deth (dethé) as a dissyllable.
[l] fits. [m] will, pleasure.

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Fully to be at her commaundément;
And, if I dyén, in my testament
My herte I sende and my spirite also,
What so ever she lyste with hem to do:

And, [a] alder last, unto her womanhede
And to her mercy me I recommaunde,
That lye nowe here betwixen hope and drede,
Abidinge plainly what she list commaunde;
For utterly this ne is no [o] demaunde:
Welcome to me, whilés me lasteth breth,
Ryght at her choise, [p] where it by lyfe or deth.

And in this mater more what might I [q] saine,
Sith in her hand and in her wil is al,
Bothe lyfe and deth, my joye and al my peine?
And finally my [r] hesté hold I shal,
Til my spirite, by destenye fatal,
Whan that her lysteth, fro my body [s] wende:
Have here my trouth, and thus I make an ende.

ver. 534.

Unkindness and severity of his mistress.

Another principal circumstance in the narrative of this poem, is the displeasure conceived against the hero by the mistress of his affections. Thus,

Attourney there maye none admitted ben,
To excuse trouth, ne yet a worde to speke;
To faith or othe the judgé [t] lyste not sene,
There is no [u] gaine, but he will be [x] awreke.

ver. 282.

---

[a] last of all. [o] question. [p] whether. [q] say.
[r] behest, promise, resolution. [s] goes. [t] deigns not to attend.
[u] stop. [x] avenged.

CHAP. XLII.

1378.

And in another place,

And most of al for this I me complaine,
That she hath joy to laughen at my paine,
And wilfully she hath my deth ysworne.

ver. 448.

The speaker observes that it is one of the aggravations of the passion of love, that he whom Cupid has wounded, is compelled to sue to the individual who is the cause of all his suffering, for the cure.

Right thus fareth it nowe even by me,
That to my foe, that gave my herte a wounde,
[y] Mote asken grace and mercy and pité,
And namely there where none may be yfounde.

ver. 478.

Lastly, the lover states it as a cruel addition to his sorrows, that

min herte professed whilom was
For to be trewe with al my fullé myght
Onely to one, the whiché nowe, alas!
[z] Of volunté, without any trespas,
Myne accusours hath taken unto grace,
And cherisheth hem, my deth to purchace.

ver. 297.

originating in the unmerited calumnies which had been invented against him.

Thus far the story is, for the most part, only that obvious

---

[y] Am compelled to ask.

[z] Voluntarily, arbitrarily.

tale of love which every poet is accustomed to rehearse. The most ordinary versifier will tell us of a knight that is constant and unbounded in his devotion, and a lady cruel and inexorable in her treatment of his passion. What distinguishes the Complaint of the Black Knight from the current of love-tales, is that the hero of this poem has fallen under the displeasure of his mistress in consequence of the unmerited calumnies which had been invented against him: nor is it in the least probable that John of Gaunt, in his courtship of the princess Blanche, was exposed to any such incident.

Before Chaucer enters directly upon his subject, it is thus that he prepares his auditors for the tale he has to relate:

> And if that any nowe be in this place,
> That feleth in love [a] breninge or fervence;
> Or hindered were to his ladies grace
> With falsé tongés, that with pestilence
> [b] Sle trewé men, that never did offence
> In worde nor dede, ne yet in [c] her entent;
> If any soche be here nowe in present,——
>
> ver. 205.

The style in which the hero's misfortune is described in the body of the poem, seems much too grave for a love-tale, and is singularly appropriate to the political history of John of Gaunt during this period.

The style in which they are spoken of, too grave for a love-tale.

---

[a] burning. [b] Slay. [c] their.

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> Falsly accus'd, and of his [d] fone forjuged
> Withouten answere, while he was absent,
> He damned was.
>
> ver. 276.

Unfortunate destiny of true lovers, and prosperous success of the disloyal.

A principal source of the anguish which we may suppose John of Gaunt to have felt while he was under the displeasure of Richard, was from the consciousness that, while he, the best support of the throne, and the truest friend of him who sat upon it, was discarded with obloquy, the heedless and misjudging monarch gave all his confidence to foolish and profligate courtiers, persons whose suggestions directly led to the most fatal calamities, and who, while they pretended the utmost attachment to their patron, thought only of their own private and sinister purposes. Chaucer, to express this sentiment (if we are right in our explanation of the poem), has allegorically introduced a catalogue of true lovers whose passion was frustrated, and whose end was unfortunate; contrasting it with the perfidious and specious pretenders (the names of whom are principally taken from Ovid's Epistles), whose pursuits were crowned with success.

> For ever [e] sithens that the worlde began,
> Who so lyste loken, and in story rede,
> He shall aye finden that the trewé man
> Was put abacke,——
>
> ver. 324.

---

[d] foes. [e] since.

But [f] lesingoures with [g] her base flatterie,
Through [g] her falshede, and with [g] her doublenesse,
With talés newe, and many a fained lie,
By false semblaunt, and counterfeit humblesse,
Under colour depainte with stedfastnesse,
With fraude covert under a pitous face,
Accepted be nowe [h] rathest unto grace;

And can hem selven nowe best magnifie,
With fained porte, and [g] her presumpcion;
They [i] hauncen [g] her cause with false [k] surquidrie,
Under menyng of double' entencion,
To thinke one thing in [g] her opinion,
And saye another', to set hem selve alofte,
And hinder trouthe.

Critical defects of the poem.

Taking for granted that the design of Chaucer in this poem has been truly unfolded, it must be admitted that there is a species of weakness and effeminacy inherent in the plan, more correspondent to the general idea of Spenser's vein, than to that of the poetry of our elder and patriarch bard. In describing loyalty under the image of the passion of love, something of the free, energetic and awful qualities with which it might be adorned, must necessarily be lost: and still more, in treating of the aspersions by which the statesman was harassed and controled, a plaintive style of self-pity is inevitably introduced, which ill suits with the masculine vigour we require in a public character, or with the generous disdain we are accustomed to connect with the

---

[f] liars, hypocrites. [g] their. [h] soonest. [i] advance.
[k] consequence, ostentation.

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name of John of Gaunt. The general idea itself of representing a grander, under the image of a meaner and more trivial, topic, is frigid, unnatural, and repulsive to a genuine taste. We are not however from this consideration entitled to make any deduction against the probability of the Complaint of the Black Knight being an allegorical poem. Allegory was the taste of the day; and half the productions of Chaucer's earlier and middle age were of this class.

Important purpose which it was designed to answer.

On the other hand, if such be the true interpretation of the poem, we may conceive that Chaucer regarded it with no common degree of complacency. He was employed in it vindicating his generous patron and faithful friend from a series of the foulest and most unmerited aspersions that were ever cast upon an innocent and honourable character. He was erecting a perennial monument to his integrity, his sincerity and his patriotism. Allegory, as being a species of composition nearly obsolete, is less obvious to our apprehension, than it was to that of the polite scholars of the fourteenth century. But, reasoning upon general principles of human nature, we may venture to affirm that Chaucer did not exactly anticipate this change. He regarded himself as penning an historical record of the views of the celebrated personage to whom his poem relates, not only more durable than the malignant calumnies of his enemies, but which perhaps might outlast public edifices and public institutions, all of mortal creation that his eye surveyed, even the venerable foundations at Oxford and at Winchester which were laid by the father of the mischiefs he deplored.

Illustration from the

We have seen Chaucer, in his poem of the House of

Fame, treating public estimation and notoriety with a pointed degree of indifference and contempt. This forms a link of connection between that work and the performance we are here considering. It is probable that he composed his House of Fame under the quick and poignant feeling of the arbitrary nature of popular applause, as exemplified in the history of the king of Castille. A further parallel circumstance in this poem to the House of Fame, is that the author here [l], as in that production [m], complains that he is under some extraordinary depression of mind.

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1378. House of Fame.

This composition, like all the original performances of Chaucer, is stamped with those lively, spirited and cheerful views of nature, which form one of the signatures of his genius. This is conspicuous in the landscape with which the poem opens. His walk begins,

Specimen of Chaucer's descriptive powers.

When that the mistie vapour was agone,
And clere and fairé was the [n] morownyng,
The dewe also like silver in shinyng
Upon the leves, as any baumé swete;
Till firie Titan, with his [o] persaunt hete,

Had driéd up [p] the lustie licour newe
Upon the herbés in the grené mede,
And that the floures of many divers hewe
Upon her stalkés [q] gonen for to sprede,
And for to [r] splaie out her levés in [s] brede

[l] ver. 17—21. [m] See Chap. XXXVII, p. 201. [n] morning. [o] piercing.
[p] the dew. [q] began. [r] unfold their leaves. [s] breadth.

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[t] Againe the sonne, [u] golde burned in his spere,
That doune to hem ycast his bemés clere.

ver. 24.

The poet presently finds a convenient shelter from the heat, the habitation of birds,

Whiche, on the braunches both in plain and vale,
So loude ysang, that all the wode yrong,
Like it should shiver into peces smale.

ver. 44.

And the scene is made complete by a rivulet, exquisitely described,

That had his course, as I could wele behold,
Under a hill, with quické stremes and colde.

ver. 76.

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[t] Against.

[u] shining like burnished gold.

CHAP. XLIII.

DEATH OF CHARLES V.—STATE OF SOCIETY IN EUROPE.—INSURRECTION OF THE COMMON PEOPLE.—UNFORTUNATE EVENTS WHICH BEFEL THE KING OF CASTILLE.

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1379. Escheat of the duchy of Britanny.

THE war in France during the immediately following years was marked with few considerable events. Charles V. adopted with regard to Britanny the same policy which he had employed with success in the case of Aquitaine; declared the feudal tenant to have forfeited his title, and promulgated an act annexing his principality for ever to the crown[a]. But the issue of the proceeding was very different from what it had been in the former instance. The lords of France were jealous of such an addition to the power of their sovereign; the inhabitants of the province had been accustomed to look up to their immediate chief, resident among them, and desired to continue to do so. In the affair of Aquitaine the retaining their particular lord seemed less a fresh symbol of the inde-

De Montfort recalled by his subjects.

[a] Henault, Abrégé Chronologique de l'Histoire de France, ad ann.

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pendence of the people, than a submission to a foreign yoke; but there was no such unpleasing circumstance attending the case of Britanny. Accordingly the inhabitants no sooner heard of the decree that had been passed, than they joined to recal their native lord [b]. He

1380. Campaign of the earl of Buckingham.

was supported in his return by Thomas of Woodstock earl of Buckingham, youngest brother of John of Gaunt, who gained considerable reputation in this campaign [c]. But De Montfort was now weary of the vicissitudes he had experienced, and saw before him the means of repose and

Death of Charles V.

security. The Bretons loved their native prince, but hated the English; and Charles V, under whose direction the decree of forfeiture had been issued, died toward the close

and of Du Guesclin.

of the campaign. Du Guesclin expired two months before

De Montfort deserts the English alliance.

the death of his sovereign. The successor, Charles VI, was a minor nearly of the same age as Richard II; and De Montfort found little difficulty in obtaining, from the regency which conducted the government of France, a revocation of the sentence of forfeiture which had been pronounced against him. The negotiation to that effect was carried on in silence; and, when avowed, the English found themselves obliged indignantly to withdraw from the territory of the ally who had abandoned their cause [d].

Literary character of Charles V.

Charles V, as well as his contemporary and competitor, Edward III, was decisively a friend to literature and to

[b] Froissart, Chap. xliv.

[c] Ditto, Chap. liii, liv. lv.

[d] Ditto, Chap. lxv.

men of letters. He was fond of reading; and it was difficult to present him with any thing which he valued more than books. John, his father, left a collection not exceeding twenty; but Charles V. increased his library to nine hundred. It contained volumes of devotion, astrology, medicine, law, history and romance; and the king was not more scrupulous in the constant use of his religious auxiliaries, than he was curious in the investigation of the occult sciences. He possessed indeed few of the classical writers in their original language; not a copy of Cicero; and, of the Latin poets, only Ovid, Lucan and Boethius. Translated into French, he however included in his collection Livy, Valerius Maximus, the Bible, and certain works of Aristotle and St. Austin[e]. The versions from Aristotle were made by his special command[f].

The history of the reign of Richard II. is exceedingly imperfect. In his second year we find from the records the king of Castille constituted lieutenant of the marches of Scotland[g], and for the year following receiving a fresh commission to act against France[h]. Yet in neither of these years does he appear from the historians to have exercised the powers thus conferred upon him.

King of Castille sent against the Scots.

In the autumn of the present year however, he unquestionably proceeded upon a commission to Scotland. We shall presently have occasion to refer to the events of this expedition.

Council of regency discharged.

The government had now for upward of two years

[e] Henault, ad ann.

[f] Pasquier, Recherches de la France, Liv. VII, Chap. V.

[g] Collins, ad ann.

[h] Rymer, 2 Ric. 2, Jun. 12.

CHAP. XLIII. 1380. been nearly in the same hands, and, as will always happen in the case of an oligarchical council temporarily administering the affairs of a great nation, it continually declined in respect to weight and popularity. An expedient was now attempted for remedying this evil; but it proved, as might well have been expected from the feebleness of its character, wholly inadequate to the end. It was imagined that the council of regency was too numerous; and the commons, in the beginning of this year, petitioned that it might be dissolved, and the administration confided to the five great officers of state, the chancellor, treasurer, and keeper of the privy seal, together with the lords chamberlain and steward of the houshold, not to be removed but by address from the two houses of parliament[i].

Poll-tax. In the year following, the evils which had been nursed and ripened in the nation ever since the epoch of the Good Parliament, broke out into a tremendous flame. The depredations which were committed upon our coasts, and the burning of our harbours, by the French cruisers, were events strongly contrasted with the successes of the brilliant years of Edward III, and were regarded by the English with great impatience and indignation. The system of taxation was yet in its infancy, and therefore required to be conducted with a cautious and a skilful hand. At the same time it unfortunately happened that the state of war in which England had so long been involved, called for copious supplies. The taxes imposed had, as we have seen, been a principal topic of complaint in the Good Parliament; and that assembly was incon-

[i] Cotton, 3 Ric. 2.

siderate enough to state it as their expectation that, at the end of an extensive and critical war, the public coffers should be full, without any additional burthens imposed upon the subject. Now that the individuals who had prompted the measures of the Good Parliament were in power, the evil was not diminished. The insufferable load of taxation was the subject of every day's complaint; and, a poll-tax of one shilling *per* head having been voted by the parliament which met in November 1380[j], this proved the occasion to one of the most terrible insurrections recorded in history.

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State of society in Europe.

The situation of the different governments of Europe was at this time exceedingly critical, and we have seen the convulsions which grew out of this circumstance in France, in the year immediately subsequent to the battle of Poitiers. The forms of magistracy now in existence had been the produce of a period of the utmost ignorance and oppression, when the mass of the inhabitants in every country had obtained no consideration. The great lords and holders of feudal tenures were powerful and fierce, and able to dictate to the sovereign to whom they yielded the external forms of superiority; but the common people were universally in a state of servitude, and were transferred like stock with the estates on which they resided. An important change however had for some time been silently operating in society. In proportion as knowledge had been cultivated, and arts called into existence, a power

[j] Cotton, 4 Ric. 2. The tax was higher than this sum upon the rich, and lower upon the poor, but this is named in the record as the average of the assessment.

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had arisen in the community, independent of the feudal chieftains, and which rested for its foundation upon that opulence which is the fruit of industry. The commercial towns of Italy and Flanders make a considerable figure in the history of this period. We have seen the degree of importance acquired by some of the citizens of our own metropolis [k]. The house of commons, a new phenomenon in the English history, owed its existence to the rise of the towns on the one hand, and the reduction of the feudal tenures on the other, producing our burgesses and knights of the shires.

Villainage.

But, though the forms of civil government had been gradually accommodating themselves to the new state of society, the change did not keep pace with the demands of the situation. Villainage, that is, a condition of the lower classes of the community, obliging them to afford their labour to their superiors without compensation, was at this time more general in England than in any other country of Europe [l]. What the people had in darker ages and ruder times borne without murmuring, and regarded as the inevitable concomitant of their destiny, they now began to consider as the bitterest injustice. This was the period of the awaking of the human mind. Prejudice was dying away; superstition was relaxing its hold; men began to open their eyes, and examine their situation; to enquire to what they were condemned, and of what they were capable. This was the era of the sacred doctrines of equality; doctrines which, if temperately and

[k] Vol. I, Chap. I.

[l] Froissart, Chap. lxxiv.

seriously weighed, are fraught with inestimable benefits, but, if rashly, superficially and irreverently acted upon, are the plagues of mankind, involving their disciples in the most fearful calamity, and bringing discredit upon the principles of justice and truth. Unfortunately, it is this hasty and intemperate proceeding to which the mass of mankind are prone; they catch fire from the glimpses of mental illumination, but do not allow it time to pervade the social system with its vivifying heat.

Decline of the feudal system.

It may be allowable in this place to digress to another circumstance belonging to the present state of society in Europe, which, though not so immediately connected with the insurrections of the present year, is necessary to complete our picture of the degrees of civilisation and barbarism at this time prevailing. The feudal system, as has been repeatedly observed, had undergone great dilapidations; a chief tenant of the crown was no longer that formidable sort of little monarch, which he had been under the Norman princes. Hence the smaller tenants in chief had found it necessary to cooperate for mutual advantage, and their feelings and interests had given a beginning to what are known by the appellation of the knights of the shires. Another expedient had risen out of this situation, the introduction of liveries and retainers.

Representation.

Retainers.

In the vigorous state of the feudal system each lord had been a magistrate and a judge on his domains, deciding upon the controversies or transgressions of his people according to his own ideas or caprice. When this system had fallen to decay, the immediate result was a fresh influx of anarchy and violence. For the purpose of resisting this evil, the smaller tenants of the crown were

CHAP. XLIII. 1381. forward to resort to the greater; and the greater, who had also lost somewhat of their power, eagerly accepted the proffered reinforcement. Every one, being by birth a gentleman, but by the vicissitudes of fortune deprived of the means of subsistence, and many whose situation was by no means equally forlorn, willingly put on the badge and coat of their more opulent neighbour, and acknowledged themselves in some sort members of his train: their appropriate appellation was that of retainers. In the establishment of this new species of relation was included a compact, that the parties should maintain each other's quarrel, and unite in resisting any incrpachment or aggression that should be made upon either. From the reign of Richard II. to that of Henry VII. inclusive, many laws were made to repress this species of confederacy.

It is easy to see with how much confusion and disorder this institution was pregnant. Those concerned in it looked not to any general species of jurisprudence, common to the whole realm, or approved by the universal feelings of mankind, but to the approbation or acquittal of their confederacy and its leader. Rapes, murders, pillages and extortion, were the common complaints which grew out of this species of society. All was violence; nothing was secure. It was a frequent practice of the great lord, by the awe of his power, or the number of his dependents, to wrest from the king a pardon of the offences of those who composed his retinue. The walled towns, the abodes of opulence and traffic, were the only places in which any thing like a regular police prevailed. The open country was too often a scene of robbery to the traveller, and of insolent tyranny or unresisting oppression to the settled inhabitant. We may

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well at first sight be surprised, that sentiments so gallant, manners in several respects so delicate and refined, an intellect so cultivated, and so much of literature, fancy and taste, as marked this period, could subsist in the immediate neighbourhood of such a degree of barbarism, insecurity and insolence.

Insurrection.

The signal to the present insurrection is said to have been an insult committed by one of the collectors of the poll-tax, upon the daughter of a tyler, of the town of Dartford in Kent[m]. The law prescribed a certain age, supposed to be the age of puberty, as the period at which the tax should begin to be assessible; and a dispute having arisen between the tax-gatherer and the father, the former had recourse to a very indecent expedient for ascertaining the girl's years. The mechanic felt like a parent; and, with the tool with which he happened to be working at his trade, deprived the offender of existence. Immediately the people of the vicinity, already ripe for revolt, flew to arms; the flame spread with rapidity from village to village, and from county to county; and in a few days one hundred thousand men were assembled on Blackheath, four miles from London[m]. The tumult was wholly unforeseen, and no power existed adequate to oppose the flood of its violence. The insurgents immediately entered the metropolis, burned down the Temple and the Hospital of the knights of St. John of Jerusalem, set open all the prisons, and possessed themselves of the Tower of London. Feeling at present that they were superior to restraint, they determined

The insurgents at Blackheath.

enter London.

[m] Walsingham, ad ann.

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to inforce the most rigid principles of equality. To prove that they were not ashamed of the meanness of their origin, they assumed feigned names, expressive of their former mechanical occupations; such as Wat Tyler, Hob Carter, Tom Miller and Jack Straw. Nothing could exceed the haughty demeanour of their leaders, the intoxication attendant upon their brief prosperity, and the insolence with which they treated the exalted in station or in birth;—neither the pride imputed to John of Gaunt, nor that actually indulged by Courteney bishop of London. Tyranny marked their proceedings, and their footsteps were tracked with blood. Their principal scenes of summary execution were the western extremity of Cheapside, and Tower Hill. Every man connected in any way with the practice of the law was particularly the object of their proscription. Some they put to death because they could not speak English, and others because the implements of writing were found in their houses. They came to the resolution of destroying all records, that no vestige might remain of their former slavery, but all things begin anew. They pounded all jewels or gold plate in a mortar, and cast the dust into the Thames, to express their animosity to the accumulation of wealth. Two of their unhappy victims, mangled and beheaded on Tower Hill, were Simon Sudbury archbishop of Canterbury, lord chancellor, and sir Robert Hales prior of the knights of St. John of Jerusalem, lord treasurer of the realm. A third immolated in the same butchery, was a Franciscan Friar, whose name appears to have been William Appledore, a man consummately skilled in natural philosophy, and a particular favourite of John of Gaunt. Having overtaken the

Their excesses.

murder the lord treasurer and the archbishop of Canterbury.

dowager princess of Wales on her road from Canterbury, they forced upon her their brutal kisses, to evince that all distinctions of rank were at an end. Wat Tyler, the leader of the Kentish insurgents, declared that henceforward there should be no law in England but what came from his mouth; and Litster, a dyer of Norwich, who commanded another innumerable band from that quarter of the island, and styled himself king of the commons, found a savage amusement in compelling the men of rank he encountered, some, to carve his dishes, and others, to be cup-bearers at his royal board, after the manner of chivalry.

1381. Wat Tyler.

John Litster.

Nothing can be more similar in many respects than the demeanour of the lower classes of people in all ages of the world in their successful insurrections. The arrogance of Wat Tyler is the precise counterpart of the arrogance of Massaniello of Naples in 1646; and the insurgents of England in the fourteenth century repressed by the most rigorous examples all instances of theft and privy conveyance among their fellows, in the same manner as was practised in the early scenes of violence and devastation in the French revolution. Nor did some of the petitions of the revolters, and the sermons of John Ball, their celebrated preacher, fall short, in strength of thinking, and that eloquence which finds a responsive chord in every human heart, of the best productions of that nature brought forth by the memorable event last alluded to.

Their rigorous police.

Their energetic lessons of equality.

John Ball.

On this occasion, particularly in one critical scene, Richard II, aged only fourteen years and six months, showed himself the genuine offspring of Edward III. and the Black Prince, and afforded the happiest promise for his future life. He had passed by water to meet the Kentish

Behaviour of Richard II.

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rebels at Greenwich, but had been dissuaded, in consequence of their furious gestures and tumultuous demeanour, from trusting himself among them [a]. He had proceeded to Mile End to meet the rebels from the Eastern coast; had granted them charters of manumission, or liberty to refuse to afford their labour where they were to receive no compensation (for this was the thing they principally desired); and successfully dispersed them [a]. But the decisive scene of this extraordinary contention was acted in Smithfield.

Conference in Smithfield.

Hither Richard repaired, attended by a considerable body of nobles and knights, to meet Wat Tyler and the main body of the insurgents. The king's party and that of the rebels were drawn up in martial array facing each other. Messengers passed and repassed, negotiating the disputes which arose between the contending authorities. Three several charters were successively dispatched from the king to the head of the populace, and were all pronounced inadmissible. It was supposed by many to be the object of the insurgents to draw out the parley till night, that under favour of the darkness they might renew their devastations in a mode of still superior violence. Tyler however, assuming an air of anger at his repeated disappointments, declared his resolution to confer with the king in person; and, ordering his party to halt, and putting spurs to his horse, he rode into the midst of the band of nobles and knights who surrounded the king. Having come so near, that his horse's head touched the crupper of the king's charger, he said, "Sir king, seest thou all yonder people?"

[a] Knighton, ad ann. Froissart, Chap. lxxvi.

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"Yea, truly," replied the king. "Because," answered Tyler, "they be all at my commandment, and have sworn to me faith and truth, to do all that I will have them." Saying this, he observed a knight, whom the king had just before sent to him, and to whom he had expressed displeasure, on horseback, bearing a sword in state before the sovereign. "It had better become thee," said Tyler haughtily, "to be on foot in my presence." To this insolence the knight replied with spirit; and Tyler attempted to strike him with his dagger; but the king commanded the knight to dismount. Tyler then called for the knight's dagger, and by Richard's order it was delivered. He next required his sword. "The sword thou seest," answered the generous warrior, while he grasped it with a vigorous hand, "is not mine, but my king's; thou art not worthy to have it; nor wouldst thou dare to ask it, if there were here no more but thou and I." Tyler, exasperated at this contumacy, swore he would have the knight's head; and, regardless of his own situation, prepared to attack him in a desperate manner. Walworth, mayor of London, who was at hand, exclaimed it were great shame, if they should permit a noble knight to be murdered before their face; and immediately assaulted Tyler. The signal was sufficient, and the rebel speedily perished, covered with wounds.

Altercation.

Tyler slain.

This was undoubtedly a most pregnant moment, and one false step would probably have caused the king and his party to be instantly massacred. The boy Richard, as if suddenly inspired with the genius of his father and grandfather, rode up to the rebels, who were by this time bending their bows, and exhorting each other to revenge

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Speech of the king

the death of their chief. "What a work is this, my men?" said he. "What mean ye to do? Will you shoot at your king? Be not sorry for the death of a traitor and a ribald: I will be your captain and your leader: follow me into the fields, there to have whatsoever you will require." The multitude were struck with this extraordinary address: they complied with mute astonishment: time was gained: the mayor hastened to assemble a force for the deliverance of the king: the gallant veteran, sir Robert Knolles, chanced to offer himself as the commander: the undisciplined rabble were taken by surprise, and filled with despair; and now quietly dispersed with such concessions as it was thought politic to grant them [o].

He is rescued.

Walworth, the mayor, who had so memorably distinguished himself on this occasion, with Philpot and two other citizens, received the honour of knighthood; and this seems to be the first instance in which the insignia of chivalry were thus diverted from their original appropriation. Walworth excused himself, that he was not worthy nor able to take such estate upon him, being but a merchant and accustomed to live by the fruits of his traffic: but his objection was overruled.

Punishment of the rebels.

The concessions made to the insurgents were afterward unconditionally revoked, as being granted under the influence of compulsion; and bloody execution was done upon the guilty under the sanction of royal authority or of the law. Fifteen hundred persons are said to have perished in this manner, to expiaté the crime of the insurrection [p].

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[o] Walsingham, Froissart, Knighton, Stow.

[p] Froissart, Chap. lxxix.

CHAP. XLIII.

1381. Atrocities of Tyler and his associates.

The proceedings of the insurgents under Wat Tyler were marked with the most flagitious enormities: their steps were to be traced by the wanton and brutal executions which they perpetrated; and, not content with signalising their vengeance upon such of their countrymen as with or without reason they judged to be their oppressors, they arbitrarily proscribed the natives of a separate region, the Flemings, numbers of whom were to be found in our metropolis, and insolently put them to the brief trial of their ability to pronounce certain English words, every one who failed being put to death. Nor ought we to wonder at this. The bulk of the nation were at this time predial slaves: and it is not so much climate, as the moral condition in which a people is placed, that regulates their demeanour. The English character such as in later periods it has been found; that character which seems to know no affinity to the atrocities of arbitrary bloodshed; which, in seasons of popular licence and frenzy, and amidst the vicissitudes of civil contention, has preserved a comparative decency and moderation that few other countries can boast; had not yet assumed its attributes and form: it was germinating, but not disincumbered from its parent clay. For that character we are indebted to the species of individual security which we have enjoyed, and to the spirit of independence and self-respect which the consciousness of individual security engenders: these circumstances, combining with the unusual share of intellectual power which we have derived from the bounty of nature, has made us what we are, that great and extraordinary people, to which future ages, when the annals of England shall have become ancient history, will be able to do unbiased and ample justice.

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1381. Views which the state of society at this time produced in the mind of Chaucer.

This was the state of society which Chaucer saw, and which could not but occasion to him many profound reflections. He was a poet; and no man can be worthy of that name, who has not attentively studied the sensations and modes of feeling which various external impressions are calculated to produce in the human mind. He was the poet of character and manners; such he eminently appears in his last and most considerable work, the Canterbury Tales. He was a statesman, closely connected with, and deeply interested in, the changing fortunes of the first prince of the blood. From all these reasons we may be convinced, that he was no careless and indifferent spectator of what was acting on the great theatre of public affairs. If John of Gaunt had not foreseen the tumults of this period, we may well believe that Chaucer foresaw them. Not exactly in time and place; for that is not the province of human sagacity. But he saw the posture of society; he saw what was passing in the minds of men; he heard the low, indistinct, murmuring, pent up sound, that preceded this memorable crash of the elements of the moral world. He perceived the oppressed and fettered multitude shaking their chains, and noted their quick, impatient pants after freedom and happiness. Like every good man, and every true lover of his species, it is reasonable to suppose that he sympathised in their cause, and wished success to their aims, till he saw them conducting themselves in such a manner, as was no less destructive to themselves than calamitous to their lords, and as led to the introduction of universal ignorance and barbarism. We shall presently see how strenuously he ex-

erted himself two years after for the immunities of his fellow citizens of the metropolis.

1381. Way in which it modified his genius and fortune.

The insurrection of this period is in another way connected with the life of Chaucer. The causes which produced the excesses of Wat Tyler and his associates were the causes to which Chaucer owed his being as a poet. At no earlier period was it possible that a layman, the son of a trader of the city of London, should have risen to the eminence of being the first literary character of his country. He is not a writer of extravagant romances, but, in a degree little inferior to any man that ever lived, the poet of nature. He paints his fellow beings with a free and an intrepid hand. Even the descriptive parts of his works testify the freedom of his mind. He breathes the pure and soul-stirring element, he catches the glowing colours that variegate the great landscape of the universe, with senses such as never belonged to the man whose body was in chains, and who was bred a slave.

All nature must be set in motion to make a poet. Every thing within the circumference of political society must concur to ripen his talents and expand his powers, to feed his reflections with wholsome aliment, and to awaken in him the consciousness of what he is. Nothing can more strongly confirm this theory than the example of Chaucer. When did England first produce a man, since the revival of literature, worthy to be called a poet? When the enormous and cumbersome mass of the feudal system was more than half crumbled away, when the popular part of our constitution began to rear its head, and man in a collective sense learned to look inward upon himself. We should observe however that the state

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favourable to the creative and original powers of our species is a state of activity, not a state of turbulence and disorder. The reign of the Plantagenets was auspicious to the improvement of intellect; the period of the civil wars which succeeded, almost overthrew all that had previously been gained. The state of society required must be a state where all is cheerful, every thing is in a motion, and the humours of the body politic circulate freely; not a state of fever, wild and incoherent fancies, inflammation and death.

Antipathy of the insurgents to the king of Castille.

To the insurgents of this period the king of Castille appears to have been particularly obnoxious, and it is requisite that we should enquire into the causes of this protracted unpopularity. It was rather to be expected that he should at this time have been looked up to as the saviour of his country; and the mildness and generosity of his temper especially fitted him to appear in that character. Having withdrawn from all concern in the administration of public affairs, it was to be expected that he should have escaped that odium which ordinarily attaches to the situation of a minister. More elevated in rank, more opulent in fortune, and perhaps we may add more distinguished in talents, than any other eminent political character in England, we might have imagined that the retired and disinterested station he had chosen for himself, would have fixed all eyes upon him as the arbiter of differences, the oracle to be consulted in matters of urgent and delicate solution, and the guardian genius of England. The contrary of this however was evidently the case. Those persons whose purpose it was to exclude him from the helm of affairs were deeply interested to

divert from him the breath of popular applause, and they were but too successful in the malignant industry they were solicitous to employ. CHAP. XLIII. 1381.

Causes of his unpopularity.

They had begun, as we have seen, with representing him as secretly aspiring to the crown, and of consequence as a man whose measures relative to his nephew were all to be imputed to the worst and most treacherous motives. They had calumniated his temper, and had seized or invented occasions to persuade his countrymen that he was harsh, imperious, overbearing and revengeful. If he had had the reality of these qualities, his adversaries would have been less successful in misrepresenting him; the placability of his temper encouraged them to offend, and prevented him from employing those strong and peremptory measures which would best have vindicated him from their attacks. His declared principles on the subject of ecclesiastical establishments gave new energies to their animosity; they held it as the only means of their safety, to disarm the very impulse of reformation by doing injury to him. It must also be acknowledged that, whatever were the solid and essential merits of John of Gaunt, he was deficient in the arts of setting them off to advantage. He was not skilled to court the wayward suffrage of the public voice; he was ignorant of the thousand arts by which virtues are often made to appear of twofold value, and defects are metamorphosed into merits and graces. He had the elevated and free spirit of a son of chivalry, and could not condescend to indirect and circuitous means. He disdained to imitate the men whom he often saw laying aside the dignity of their station to court and

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level themselves with the mean, personating a humility which they did not feel, and bringing into play every hypocritical and insinuating artifice to cajole the favour of the vulgar. He was the friend of the people, and expected to be recognised for what he was. His thoughts were honourable, and his heart was clear; and he regarded this as the sufficient basis of a solid reputation. He was desirous to be the actual possessor of excellences, and did not dream of adopting a distinct series of actions that he might seem to be what he was.

Quarrel of John of Gaunt and the earl of Northumberland.

A misunderstanding particularly unfortunate in the present moment, had broken out in the year 1380 between John of Gaunt and his old and constant friend, the earl of Northumberland. The Scots had repeated their annual ravages in the summer of this year; and Northumberland, as one of the lords of the marches, prepared to take vengeance upon them for their aggression [q]. The king of Castille in the mean time received an ample commission to redress all wrongs, and adjust all differences with respect to the Scottish nation [r]; and orders were issued to the earl of Northumberland to abstain from hostilities till the arrival of the new commander [q]. It does not appear that John of Gaunt engaged in any military measures on this occasion: he obtained from the Scots a truce for a year [s], and afterward an enlargement of this truce till the spring of 1383 [t]. The orders which were sent to the earl of Northumberland might therefore have been intended

[q] Walsingham, ad ann.

[r] Rymer, 4 Ric. 2, Sep. 6.

[s] Rymer, Nov. 1.

[t] ditto, Jun. 18.

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either to prevent the unnecessary effusion of blood, or for the purpose of reserving the honour to be acquired on this occasion for the person to whom was assigned the principal command. If the former were the motive, it reflects the highest lustre upon the king of Castille; and if the latter, it was probably considered as a proceeding of course, when a person of higher rank and possessing a more ample commission was about to arrive. The earl however was animated with that haughtiness of spirit and delicacy of honour, which we are accustomed to ascribe to the knights and warriors of old; and could not tamely brook this restraint put upon him on the part of a prince toward whom he had displayed the most zealous attachment on trying occasions.

News received of Wat Tyler's insurrection.

John of Gaunt had been induced, for the purpose of his conferences with the Scots, to advance to the northward; while he left his equipage, and the provisions that would be required in case hostilities should become necessary, sheltered by the walls and garrison of the fortress of Berwick[a]. It was while he was thus advanced upon the Scottish border, that he received the afflicting intelligence of the revolt and triumphant progress of the English populace. Tragical communications sound larger and more terrible, when the person to whom they are made is at a distance from the place of action. Had the king of Castille been cast in the scene of these commotions, his courage and manly spirit would have been awakened; he would have bid defiance to the assaults of fear; he would have seen from moment to moment what

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[a] Froissart, Chap. lxxiii.

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the emergency of affairs called for, and have busied himself with earnestness and a sanguine hope in providing the remedy. Now he could hear of no interesting transaction till some days after it was past; he was without power to stem the torrent of events; his nephew, his family and his friends might be destroyed, the most terrible disasters that human imagination can figure might be completed, even while he was reflecting upon the subject, and shaping the forms of the possible future.

Truce concluded with the Scots.

The king of Castille had already received intelligence of the anarchy which so extensively reigned in his native country, before he signed the truce of the eighteenth of June in the present year[x]. Duty and sentiment alike urged his speedy return to the relief of a kingdom, of which he was naturally the guardian, though he was not formally recognised as such. He eagerly hastened toward his native home. The first stage of his march was Berwick, where he had left his provisions and his military chest. Into this town he was refused admittance by the officer who held the command of it under the earl of Northumberland[y].

John of Gaunt refused entrance into Berwick.

We must call to mind the particulars of the present situation, before we can fully apprehend the pang which the king of Castille felt at this moment. He was cut off from all his friends, from all whom duty and the ties of nature instructed him to love. He was cut off from them at a season of unspeakable peril, when

[x] Rymer, ubi supra. Froissart, Chap. lxxviii.

[y] Froissart, ubi supra.

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Distress of the Spanish princess, his consort.

the king, his youthful ward, was compelled day after day to expose himself to the violence of a brutal populace, drunk with prosperity and with blood; when his consort, the Spanish princess, fled with the most terrible apprehensions from Leicester to Pomfret, and from Pomfret to Knaresborough [a].

Anxieties suffered by John of Gaunt.

Nor was the king of Castille only prevented from assisting, or understanding the condition of, his family and country; he was exposed to the most painful anxiety as to his own situation and the clearness of his fame. The insurgents pointed their greatest animosity against him; they are said to have engaged in an oath that they would recognise no king whose name was John, meaning by this declaration to express their abhorrence of him [a]; they made it one of their insolent conditions to their sovereign that his evil counsellors, his eldest uncle in particular, should be delivered into their hands to be treated according to their demerits, and rumours were industriously propagated that Richard had assented to this requisition [a]. The bulk of his countrymen had expressed themselves dissatisfied, that the king of Castille had restrained the hostilities of the earl of Northumberland, while he wasted his own time in negotiation, instead of employing it in ravages and war. A report was circulated that he was making a traiterous use of the powers confided to him, and selling himself to the Scots, to prevail upon them to lend him an army to place him upon the English throne [a]. Such were the rumours which appear to have

[a] Knighton, ad ann.

[a] Walsingham, ad ann.

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1381. Palace of the Savoy burned.

been spread against him by the insurgents; and, animated by these sentiments, one of the first outrages they committed when they entered London, was the demolition of his magnificent palace of the Savoy with its wealth and precious furniture. This furniture is said to have exceeded in splendour that of any monarch in Christendom; and the quantity of gold, silver, and silver-gilt plate was sufficient to load five waggons[b]. It was enough that any man was reputed to be his friend to render him an object of their pursuit; they reversed his arms, obliterated his name, and proclaimed him a traitor to his country. When he arrived at Berwick, he found himself unexpectedly treated as an exile and an outlaw. The governor of Berwick showed him an order under the king's hand, by which he was directed to admit no person within the walls of the garrison[c]; the king of Castille was at this time notoriously in the neighbourhood upon the king's business, yet the order contained no exception for him.

Retires to Edinburgh.

It is related by the historians[d], that in this dilemma John of Gaunt accepted the invitation of the Scottish nobility, and took up his abode for some months in the palace of Holyrood House in Edinburgh. This cannot be true to the extent here stated. Wat Tyler entered London on the twelfth of June, and was killed on the fifteenth. On the eighteenth the king of Castille signed the Scottish truce. It was not till after the signature of

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[b] Knighton, ad ann.

[c] Froissart, Chap. lxxviii.

[d] Walsingham, Knighton, Fordun, Buchanan, Collins.

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this instrument, that he came to Berwick, and was there stopped in his journey to London. The letter of Richard, consoling his uncle under the losses he had sustained and the calumnies which had been propagated against him, and earnestly pressing his advance southward, is dated on the fifth of July[e]. With this invitation John of Gaunt made haste to comply; and in the middle of August we find his name in a commission for tranquillising his country after the recent disorders[f]. So that there does not appear to remain more than an interval of two or three weeks for his alleged residence at Holyrood House.

The incident itself supplies us with a pleasing picture of the manners at this time subsisting in certain ranks of life. The wars between the English and Scots were continual; the injuries and animosity from the time of Edward I. bitter and deep. John of Gaunt was the principal military commander on the part of England, and he had now marched north to repress the hostilities of the Scots by force, if he could not by negotiation bring them to the terms he desired. But all this was forgotten by the Caledonian leaders the instant they saw this illustrious personage overwhelmed with unmerited misfortunes; they opened to him the palace of their kings; they eagerly supplied to him every species of hospitality and consolation; and they proffered him an escort of troops for his safety, when he should be disposed to return to his own country. —This was under the reign of Robert, the first prince of the

[e] Rymer, ad annum et diem. [f] Ditto, 5 Ric. 2, Aug. 8.

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house of Stuart, who had succeeded to the Scottish throne in 1370.

1381. Returns to London.

Richard, to do greater honour to his uncle, sent letters to the nobility and sheriffs of the different northern counties, and among these to the earl of Northumberland, directing them to escort him in his return[g]; so that he came to the king at Reading with a company of one thousand men at arms beside archers, the persons who composed his escort being successively relieved as he passed from county to county[h]. The attendance however of the earl of Northumberland, who repaired to him in obedience to the king's orders for that purpose, he refused, full of resentment for the ill treatment he had received from the earl's officer at Berwick[h].

A parliament.

In November the parliament met, and these potent chieftains each repaired at the royal summons to that assembly. They came with an immense band of followers, and resorted each day to the parliament-house with such attendance of armed men, that it was not thought expedient to enter upon the public business, till their difference had been adjusted[i]. At length, the king taking upon himself the oversight which had been committed, and acknowledging that the governor of Berwick had only obeyed the letter of the royal mandate[k], the angry lords were prevailed upon to dismiss their quarrel, and assume a show of cordiality and good humour.

Expedition of the earl of Cambridge into Spain.

The tumults of this period were in a variety of ways injurious to the king of Castille. In the preceding year, Ferdinand king of Portugal, having conceived an animosity

[g] Rymer, 5 Ric. 2, Jul. 5.
[h] Knighton, ad ann.
[i] Cotton and Walsingham, ad ann.
[k] Froissart, Chap. lxxx.

against John, son of Henry of Transtamare, the actual possessor of the Castillian throne, sent an invitation to John of Gaunt and his brother the earl of Cambridge, to come over with their Spanish brides and a select body of auxiliaries; in which case he promised to marry his daughter and the heiress of his crown, to the son of the earl of Cambridge, and to make every exertion to place John of Gaunt upon the throne to which he had so long pretended[l]. The invitation was accepted with eagerness; there was nothing which John of Gaunt more earnestly desired than to convert his empty title into a substantial dignity; and the earl of Cambridge, with an aid of four thousand men immediately prepared to sail for Lisbon, John of Gaunt purposing to follow as soon as he should have settled the affairs of the Scottish border. The insurrections however which took place in the summer totally overturned this plan; and the king of Portugal, whose temper was in the highest degree restless and capricious, irritated at finding that John of Gaunt did not follow his brother as he had engaged to do, suddenly concluded a peace with his enemy, one condition of which was that the English auxiliaries should be sent back to their own country in Castillian vessels, a disgrace to which the earl of Cambridge was obliged to submit[m].

The campaign of Edmund of Langley has been singularly misrepresented by certain historians and antiquaries. Walsingham says that the English auxiliaries continued two years in Spain. Sandford, no very accurate collector,

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[l] Rymer, 4 Ric. 2, Jul. 5.

[m] Mariana, De Rebus Hispaniæ, Lib. XVIII, Cap. v. Modern Universal History, Book XIX, Chap. i, Sect. 7.

CHAP. XLIII. 1381. represents John of Gaunt, as well as his brother, as engaged in this expedition, and applies to it the following verses of the old rhyming chronicler, Hardyng [a].

At whiche battaill duke John of Gaunt indede,
And his brother Edmond then faught full sore;
Were ner twoo better knightes then thei indede,
That better faught upon a feld afore,
It was but grace that thei escaped thore:
Thei putte theimselfes so far furth ay in prees,
That wounded wer thei bothe full sore, no lees.

Collins, in his Life of John of Gaunt, implicitly adopts this error; but, being unable to conceive how John of Gaunt should be in Scotland and Spain at the same time, has thought proper of his own mere authority to transfer the Spanish expedition to the year 1382. Meanwhile Hardyng expressly fixes the application of his stanza to the battle of Auray, and the year 1364. The antiquaries however did no great injustice to the chronicler; since, though, as we have seen, the elder of the two royal brothers had no share in the Spanish campaign, yet in the battle of Auray, where, in the sublime representation of the poet, they were both sorely wounded, and hardly escaped with their lives, the fact is that they were neither of them present. The statement in the text is given partly on the authority of Rymer, and partly on that of the Spanish historians.

[a] Chap. 184.

CHAP. XLIV.

MARRIAGE OF RICHARD II.—LEGENDE OF GODE WOMEN.—THE FLOURE AND THE LEFE.—POETS OF THE DAISY.—FROISSART.—WILLIAM DE MACHAUT.—SMALLER CLASSES OF POETICAL COMPOSITION.

CHAP. XLIV.

1382.

IN the beginning of the following year, Richard II, being now fifteen years of age, engaged in marriage with Anne of Bohemia, sister to Wenceslaus emperor of Germany[a]. This princess appears to have been about his own age; and the king, whose susceptible temper led him to conceive the most violent attachments, appears to have loved her, during the whole period in which she was his consort, with a fervour and passion that has seldom been equalled. Her temper was cheerful; her manners were prepossessing; and the whole of her conduct was so blameless and humane, as to have gained her from contemporaries and posterity the appellation of the Good Queen Anne.

Character of Anne of Bohemia, the queen.

This is the most auspicious and prosperous period of the reign of Richard. He had just conducted himself, in the scene of the rebels at Smithfield, with a propriety, a

Prosperous situation of the young king.

[a] Rymer, 5 Ric. 2, Dec. 13. Walsingham, ad ann.

CHAP. XLIV. 1382.

firmness and presence of mind, from which a man who was neither a courtier nor an enthusiast might reasonably have drawn a happy omen of the qualities of his riper years. Men saw in him every day more of the features of his illustrious father, who, from having perished immaturely, was the more a darling of the English nation. Now when he presented to them a young and amiable princess, whom they fondly regarded as the future mother to a race of kings, they viewed Richard himself with a more lively interest. The partiality entertained by a loyal nation to a youth of ten or twelve years, their sovereign, partakes rather of a wish to love, than of love itself. Richard at this time, though young in age, became a husband; and his subjects viewed him clad in the substantial and respectable attributes of the domestic character. From this day he in some manner ceased to be a minor; he who is a husband and the master of a family, must be admitted to have entered into the obligation of the moral duties, and to have claimed the rights of a man. Hitherto the English had loved their king as the object of their expectations and their hopes; they now began to love him with that species of attachment which anxiously watches the proceedings of its favourite, eager to see its wishes realised in his conduct.

Chaucer patronised by the queen.

Chaucer was one of the courtiers who came to pay their duty to their new sovereign. Anne of Bohemia, prompted, as we may suppose, as to his merits and character, complimented his talents, but condescendingly censured the topics upon which he had sometimes exercised them. The Romaunt of the Rose was evidently a satire upon the softer sex; Troilus and Creseide was the tale of a

loyal lover and an inconstant mistress; both severe against the ladies[b]. These were the most voluminous of his works. Was it his real opinion that the whole sex deserved no better treatment? If so, however wonderful were his genius, he should never be her poet. If on the other hand he entertained sentiments of honourable gallantry, and was a genuine admirer of the sex, she advised him to make atonement for his fault by writing in praise of its worthier members.—It appears to have been at the queen's suggestion, that Chaucer produced his Legende of Gode Women.

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Legende of Gode Women.

This may be inferred from a couplet in the introductory part of the poem, in which the author says,

> And when this boke is made, yeve it the quene
> On my behalf, at Eltham or at Shene.
>
> ver. 496.

Elsewhere in the introduction he takes occasion to enumerate his principal works, and among them the House of Fame, and the "deth of Blaunché the Duchesse[c]," both written after the death of queen Philippa. The mention of the palace of Shene, which Richard demolished for grief for queen Anne who died there, proves, if the chronology of Chaucer's life did not sufficiently prove it, that the Legende of Gode Women could not be written for any queen of a later date than Anne of Bohemia.

a translation.

The Legende of Gode Women is, in part at least, a

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[b] Legende of Gode Women, ver. 320—334. [c] ver. 417, 418.

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1382.

translation. This may be concluded from Chaucer's poem of the Court of Love, written in 1346, in which he has introduced an explicit mention of the topics of this poem, proving that it was already in existence, before Chaucer treated its subjects in English. There, as here, Alcestis, the wife of Admetus king of Thessaly, who laid down her life to save that of her husband, is mentioned as the queen of Good Women[d]; and from the same passage it appears that the true number of the "ladies gode" who followed the standard of Alcestis, was nineteen[e], though the memory of only ten of them is celebrated in Chaucer's poem.

Plan of the poem.

The plan of the poem is as follows. Chaucer in a dream sees the God of Love, splendidly attired, and leading by the hand Alcestis as his queen. They are followed by nineteen ladies of eminent worth and constancy in love; and after them follows a multitude of women who, though less distinguished, each laid claim to a similar praise. Their number is at first stated (the verses are somewhat corrupted, but this appears to be the sense) as greater than Chaucer imagines the number of persons would be, if the third or fourth part of the whole human race from the creation of Adam had been assembled in one plain. Afterward he describes them as twenty thousand; but this is probably put indefinitely for a large number, and by no means intended to circumscribe the statement already made.

Cupid's displeasure against Chaucer.

The God of Love, discovering Chaucer, addresses him with much sternness, and asks him how he presumes to

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[d] ver. 108.

[e] See also Legende, ver. 383.

1382. Alcestis becomes his advocate.

appear in a spot devoted to the honour of the fair, he who had been so atrociously their calumniator in the two poems already named, of Troilus, and the Romaunt of the Rose? Alcestis in reply undertakes to plead in mitigation of the poet's offence. She alleges that perhaps what he did was done inadvertently and with no evil intention, and perhaps the subjects were prescribed to him by some person whose commands he could not with propriety resist. She observes that the works in which he had done amiss were translations, and that his fault therefore ought not to be reckoned so grievous as if he had been himself the inventor of the libels; beside which, he has perhaps deeply repented of the error into which he had fallen. She adds that he had written many other things, wholly unexceptionable in their nature; such as

> Many an hymné for your holy daies,
> That highten balades, rondels, virelaies,
>
> ver. 422.

the translations of Boethius *de Consolatione*, of Origen on the Madelaine, and the Life of St. Cecilia: and many things expressly in honour of love and of the sex; the House of Fame, the Death of the Duchess Blanche, the Parliament of Birds, and the story of Palamon and Arcite. The whole of her argument is interspersed with excellent lessons of government; such as, that it is unworthy of a king to listen to every light accusation, that envy, the mother of calumnies is the constant attendant upon courts, that a monarch should not conduct himself as if he were the mere farmer of the revenues of a state, but should think of his liege-man " as of his tresour,

CHAP. XLIV. 1382. and his golde in cofer," that he should do right alike to rich and poor, and that he should compassionate the weak, as a lion,

> Whan a flie offendeth him or biteth,
> He with his taile awaie the flie ysmiteth
> Al esily, for of his genterie
> Him deineth nat to wreke him on a flie.
>
> ver. 392.

Praise of nineteen ladies. The mediation of Alcestis is successful. The God courteously surrenders into her hands the whole question of the poet's offence; and she prescribes that, by way of expiating his offence, he shall write a Legende

> Of Gode Women, both maidens and eke wives,
> That weren trewe in loving all [f] her lives;
> And tel of falsé men that hem betraien,
> That al [f]her life ne do nat but assaien
> How many women they may done a shame;
> For in your world that is now holde a game.
>
> ver. 484.

The God confirms the award of Alcestis, with this addition, that, when he has completed the praise of the other females most entitled to his eulogium, he shall crown the whole with the story and praise of Alcestis herself, who by her conduct on earth had gained the distinction of being made the selected companion and partner of the God of Love.

---

[f] their.

The ladies celebrated in so much as was written by Chaucer, or so much as remains to us, of his Legende, are Cleopatra, Thisbe, Dido, Hypsipyle, Medea, Lucretia, Ariadne, Philomela, Phyllis and Hypermnestra. The names of seven others in the illustrious catalogue are incidentally preserved in the Canterbury Tales[g]; Dejanira, Hermione, Hero, Helen, Briseis, Laodamia and Penelope; and from the way in which they are mentioned it seems to follow that the stories of these last, as well as of the former, had been written by Chaucer. Taken together they amount to seventeen, and, with the addition of Alcestis herself, to eighteen. The two other names, for there were nineteen ladies independently of Alcestis, are by some accident omitted in the enumeration in the Canterbury Tales, at least in the manuscripts hitherto consulted by the editors.

Their general characteristics.

It is obvious on the face of this catalogue, that the ladies who are celebrated are not all of them irreproachable on the score of chastity, or of certain other attributes usually admitted into the list of moral virtues. It seems to have been regarded by the author as sufficient if they were true in love, or if they were chargeable with no infidelity in that article; and, even with that deduction, some of the Ladies Gode could perhaps with difficulty be vindicated. All the stories are classical, and a very great majority of them extracted from Ovid's Heroical Epistles.

The subjects taken from Ovid and other classic writers.

Varied in certain particulars.

It may further be observed that Chaucer has taken the liberty of softening some of his narrations, when they con-

[g] ver. 4486—4495.

CHAP. XLIV. 1382. tained circumstances too horrible to have place in a work designed for the perusal of a queen. The rape of Lucretia is perpetrated, while she had

> lost at onés both her wit and breth,
> And in a [h] swough she lay, and woxe so ded,
> Men mighten smiten of her arme or hed,
> She feleth nothing.
>
> ver. 136.

Medea's murder of her children is also suppressed; as well as every allusion to the other forty-nine daughters of Danaus, married on the same day as Hypermnestra, each of whom killed her husband in obedience to her father's command. On the other hand, Chaucer has made Dido with child at the period of her catastrophe, a circumstance not to be found in the ancients; and has deviated from the historical account of the death of Cleopatra, by making her leap into a pit full of adders and other venomous serpents, in despair for the loss of Antonius.

Vices of the male sex humorously exaggerated.

The Legende of Gode Women is written in a somewhat humorous spirit of exaggeration, as to the infidelity and treacherous practices of the male sex. The task of writing was, as we have seen, in some degree imposed upon Chaucer; and he politely and gracefully plays with his subject. He felt that it was not a time to hold the strict balance of justice, when a queen demanded of him a panegyric upon her sex; at the same time that he has treated certain points of his subject in so easy and sportive a style,

[h] swoon.

as not to compromise his character for veracity. Thus, in closing the story of Philomela, he addresses the sex, CHAP. XLIV. 1382.

> Ye maie beware of men, if that you liste:
> For, [i] all be that he woll not for his shame
> Doén as Tereus, to [k] lese his name,
> Ne serve you as a murtherer or a knave,
> Ful little whilé shul ye trewe him have
> (That wol I sain, al wer he now my brother),
> [l] But if so be that he maie have none other.

And again, in winding up the tale of Phyllis,

> Beware, ye women, of your subtill fo
> (Sens yet this daie men maie ensample se),
> And [m] trusteth now in love no man but me.

The story of Hypsipile is told with remarkable spirit. The author begins thus. Legende of Hypsipyle.

> Thou [n] rote of falsé lovers, duke Jason,
> Thou [o] sleer, devourer and confusion
> Of gentill women, gentill créatures,
> Thou madest thy [p] reclaiming and thy lures
> To ladies, of thy [q] scathliche aparaunce,
> And of thy wordés [r] farsed with plesaunce,
> And of thy fained trouth, and thy manere,
> With thine obéisaunce and humble chere,

---

[i] albeit. [k] lose. [l] *But if so be*, Unless. [m] trust, *imperative*.

[n] root. [o] slayer.

[p] A term in falconry, for bringing the hawk to the fist, by a certain call. *Tyrwhit*.

[q] hurtful, causing mischief; in this case, by too much beauty.

[r] stuffed.

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1382.

And with thine counterfeited pain and wo;
[s] There other [t] falsen one thou falsed two.
O often swore thou, that thou wouldest die
For love, whan thou ne feltest maladie,
Save foule delite, whiche that thou callest love!
If that I [u] live, thy name shall be [w] yshove
In Englishe, that thy deceipt shall be knowe:
Have at the, Jason; now thin horn is blow.

Hypocritical behaviour of Hercules.

The project of Jason is then related for the acquisition of the golden fleece. He touches at the island of Lemnos, where he and Hercules, the most illustrious of his associates, are received with great hospitality by Hypsipyle, daughter of the king of the island. Hercules in particular wins her confidence, though without mixture "of love, or soche imagination." This confidence he abuses to the basest purposes.

This Hercules hath this Jason so preised,
That to the sunne he hath him up yreised,
That halfe so true a man there [x] nas of love
Under the cope of heven that is above;
And he was wise, hardie, secrete and riche,
Of these [y] iii pointés there [z] nas none him [a] liche;
Of fredome passed he, and [b] lustie hedde
All [c] tho that liven, and all [c] tho ben dedde;
Thereto so grete a gentillman was he,
And of Thessalie likely king to be:
There [z] nas no lacke, but that he was [d] agast
To love, and for to speken [e] shaméfast;

[s] Where. [t] deceive. [u] am now alive. [w] shoved, pushed into notice.
[x] ne was, was not. [y] *read* iiii. [z] *double negative: a Gallicism.*
[a] like. [b] lustihed, manly vigour. [c] those. [d] fearful, reluctant.
[e] shamefaced, irresolute.

[f] Him had lever himself murder and die,
Than that men should a lover him espie:
[g] As woldé God above that I had give
My blode and fleshe, so that I mighten live
With the bones, that he had [h] aught where a wife
For his estate; for soche a lustie life
She shulden leden with this lustie knight.
  And all this was compassed on the night
Betwixen Jason and this Hercules.

. . . .

And Jason is as coie as is a maide;
He loketh pitously, but naught he saied;
But frely yave he to her counsailers
Yeftés full grete.

ver. 157.

Poetry of the daisy.

One topic, suggested by the Legende of Gode Women, remains to be treated, which is of no small importance in the history of the poetry of the fourteenth century. I mean, the homage paid by Chaucer and others to the daisy. This, like most of the improvements and inventions in the poetry of these early ages, we unquestionably received from the French. What other mysteries were hid under this symbol we are unable to trace: it came recommended to the ingenious and subtle wits of that period by the threefold sense of the French term [*Marguerite*], which is either a daisy, a pearl, or the name of a woman. It has been conjectured that Chaucer had a mistress named Margaret [i]; similar conjectures have been made respecting the

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[f] He had rather. [g] God willing, I would give. [h] any where.

[i] Speght, Life of Chaucer; his friends. Life of Chaucer, apud Urry. Warton. Vol. I, Sect. xviii. Refuted by Tyrwhit, Preface, Appendix C, note n.

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other poets who have adopted this mythology[k]: it is not likely to be true of all; perhaps it was true only of the inventor.

Froissart.

Froissart, so well known and so celebrated for his historical collections, and a contemporary of Chaucer, has been held by some antiquarians to be the author of the worship of the daisy[l]. His poems, which are numerous, have never been printed; but they appear to have obtained a considerable degree of popularity in the life-time of their author. They are not rich in fancy, nor often happy in invention; but there is a truth and simplicity in the style in which they are written[k], well calculated, while they possessed the advantage of novelty, to recommend them to general favour.

His fable of the daisy.

In one of them, entitled *Le Dit de la Fleur de Marguerite*, the production of the daisy is thus fabulously related. Heres, a faithful votary of love, has the misfortune to lose her admirer Cepheus in the bloom of youth. She is inconsolable; she frequently visits his grave; and, from the tears she sheds there, springs up the daisy. Mercury was another lover of Heres, but she is constant in the rejection of his suit. By accident he discovers this extraordinary flower in January on the grave of Cepheus, gathers it, and presents it to the damsel. This singular gift renders her propitious to his addresses; and Mercury in gratitude determines to wear a chaplet of daisies round his bonnet for ever after[k].

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[k] St. Palaye, apud Memoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions, Tom. XIV.
[l] Warton, Vol. I, Sect. xviii.

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1382. Not the founder of the school.

Froissart however is not the inventor of the panegyric of the daisy. The manuscript volume of his poems in the library of the king of France, is expressed in the title to consist of poems written between the years 1362 and 1394 [m]. But Chaucer, in his poem of the Court of Love [n], written in 1346, has introduced the homage of the daisy; and that with the same idea as is annexed to it in the Legende of Gode Women [o], that Alcestis, the exemplary wife of Admetus, was after her death metamorphosed into a daisy.

Mythology of Chaucer.

But, though Chaucer has cursorily touched upon this fiction in his Court of Love, he did not regularly enlist himself among the worshippers of the daisy till toward the close of his life. In the Romaunt of the Rose his homage is paid to a more splendid and sumptuous flower. In his poem of the Floure and the Lefe, which of course was written previously to the Legende of Gode Women, being twice referred to in the course of that poem [p], he has adopted an allegory inconsistent with the mythology of the performance last named, an inconsistency which he there endeavours to reconcile [q].

The Floure and the Lefe.

A brief account of the poem of the Floure and the Lefe cannot be more properly introduced than here; interrupting the narrative of the worship of the daisy, as Chaucer himself interrupted his poetical devotion to this favoured flower in the course of his literary life.

This performance is in a very striking style of imagery, gay, variegated and diffuse. The author goes forth, early

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[m] Pasquier, Recherches de la France, Liv. VII, Chap. v.

[n] ver. 104. [o] ver. 512. [p] ver. 72, and 189. [q] ver. 189.

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1382.

Goldfinch.

Nightingale.

Ladies of the Leaf.

Their knights.

Worship of the laurel.

in the morning in the month of May, to hear the nightingale. He enters into a pleasant grove, and, by a path in which the tread of feet is scarcely perceptible, arrives at an arbour of sycamore and eglantine. While he reposes in this retreat, he is first saluted with the song of the goldfinch perched upon a medlar-tree, and then by that of the nightingale from a laurel. Soon after, he is surprised with the sound of female voices; and sees issuing from a neighbouring grove a troop of ladies, clad in white velvet, the seams laced with emeralds and other precious stones, and on their heads green chaplets of laurel, woodbine, or *agnus castus*. The ladies engage variously in songs and dancing. Meanwhile advances, on the same side from which they had issued, a multitude of men at arms, clad, like the ladies, in white velvet, the most distinguished with crowns of laurel, and the rest with chaplets of oak, woodbine and hawthorn. These engage in justs; and, their games being finished, they join the ladies, and advance together, to do honour, with song and dance, to the fairest and largest laurel-tree that was ever beheld. Among the men at arms, are distinguished the Nine Worthies, the Knights of Arthur's Round Table, Charlemagne's Twelve Peers of France, and the Knights of the order of the Garter, recently instituted by Edward III.

Knights and ladies of the Flower.

Worship of the daisy.

This ceremony being complete, the poet next sees in an opposite direction, advancing from the open field, a multitude of knights and ladies, clad in green, adorned with chaplets of flowers, and preceded by minstrelsy, the harp, the pipe, the lute and the psaltery. These proceed toward a plot of flowers, to which they do reverence, singing an ode, the burthen of which is *Si douce est la*

Marguerite, at the same time joining in a variety of dances. CHAP. XLIV.

1382. Sun and rain.

While they are thus occupied they are burned with the scorching sun, and afterward overtaken with a storm of wind, rain and hail, without means of shelter such as the former company enjoyed from the spreading shade of the laurel. The storm has also the effect of entirely dispersing and destroying the flowers with which their persons had been adorned, as well as those to which they had paid their adoration.

Hospitality of the party of the Leaf.

The tempest being dispersed, the party of the Leaf come forward, and offer hospitality to the unfortunate party of the Flower, applying herbs and ointments to their burns, and lighting stately fires to dry their clothes. Horses are then prepared, and they depart together to the refreshments prepared by the lady of the Leaf, the nightingale having first perched upon her hand; and the goldfinch,

> that fro the medlar-tre
> Was fled for hete unto the bushes cold,
>
> ver. 442.

presenting his homage to the lady of the Flower.

Explanation.

The lady of the Leaf is afterward explained to be Diana; and the lady of the Flower, Flora. The ladies in the train of Diana who have chaplets of *agnus castus* are virgins; those crowned with woodbine, such as have been true in love; and such as are crowned with laurel, women distinguished by heroical exploits. The Flower is the symbol of idleness, which,

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within a litel space,
Wollen be lost; so simple of nature
It be, that it no grevance may endure,
And every storme wol blow it sone away.

ver. 558.

The Leaf on the contrary is the symbol of perseverance,

Whose lusty grene may not [r] appaired be,
But kepeth her beauty.

ver. 553.

Dryden's version of the Flower and the Leaf.

The poem of the Floure and the Lefe is a production of Chaucer, with which Dryden was "so particularly pleased, both for the invention and the moral [s]," as to induce him to transfuse it into modern English. He has somewhat obscured the purpose of the tale, which in the original is defective in perspicuity; but he has greatly heightened the enchantment of its character. He had made its personages fairies who annually hold a jubilee, such as is here described, on the first of May; Chaucer has left the species of the beings he employs vague and unexplained. In a word, the poem of Dryden, regarded merely as the exhibition of a soothing and delicious luxuriance of fancy, may be classed with the most successful productions of human genius. No man can read it without astonishment, perhaps not without envy, at the cheerful, well-harmonised and vigorous state of mind in which its author must have been at the time when he wrote it.

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[r] impaired.

[s] Preface to Fables.

We see in the poem of the Floure and the Lefe, as well as in that of the Court of Love, an allusion to the mythology of the daisy; but it is not set out with all its circumstances except in the Prologue to the Legende of Gode Women. This mythology, as has already been observed, must have been older than the fiction of Froissart, since it is mentioned by Chaucer in the earliest of his works. Who was its inventor is uncertain: perhaps William de Machaut, a French versifier, who wrote a poem of the Lily and the Daisy[1], and whom we shall presently have occasion to mention. It is at least reasonable to believe, that it was the same person who wrote the tales of the "ladies gode xix," mentioned in the Court of Love, and translated or imitated in the poem which forms the principal subject of this chapter.

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Alcestis queen of love.

The mythology of the daisy is necessarily introduced by Chaucer, in a work, of which Alcestis, once a woman, but now changed into this flower, is the principal personage. The invention of this metamorphosis, and the elevation of the Grecian dame to the exalted place in which we see her in the writings of Chaucer, are of the same date. Nothing can more happily elucidate the temper of the fictions of chivalry, and the contrast which they afford to those of classical mythology, than this revolution in the conclave of heaven. The mythology of the ancient Greek and Roman poets is little favourable to chastity, and less so to that generous deference which

[1] Le Beuf, Notice Sommaire de Deux Volumes de Poesies, apud Académie des Inscriptions, Tom. XX.

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modern manners are accustomed to render to the female character. Their Gods are almost universally libertines and ravishers; and the Goddess to whom the poets of the softer passions paid their especial devotion, is a shameless adultress. The more reserved and decorous poets of chivalry were embarrassed with this mythology. They could not entirely depose Venus from the rank which she had so long occupied; but they resorted to a sort of conciliatory expedient. They superannuated her, and substituted another, as the active and administering divinity, in her room. The personage thus chosen was the most exemplary wife of antiquity; a lady who, according to the venerable tradition which they took for their guide, being informed by an oracle that the only condition on which fate would release her husband from the mortal disease under which he laboured, was that one of his friends should consent to die in his stead, offered to become, and was accepted by heaven as, that friend[u]. This lady is introduced in Chaucer's earliest work, and in the Legende of Gode Women, as the Queen of Love; and, as she is spoken of in the early work as the person "to whom obeied the ladies gode xix[x]," it follows that it was not Chaucer, but rather the original contriver of the Legende, to whom she was indebted for her elevation.

Her flower extolled.

In Chaucer's version of the Legende, the adoration of the daisy is introduced with much solemnity. The poet, having occasion to mention his attachment to study, proceeds,

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[u] Euripides, Tragediæ: Alcestis.

[x] ver. 108.

1382.

> There is gamé none,
> That fro my bokés maketh me to gone,
> But it be seldome, on the holie day:
> Save certainly whan that the month of Maie
> Is comen.
>
> ver. 33.

In May, no morning occurs in which he does not go forth before the dawn, "to sene this floure ayenst the sunne yspréde," and there "to do it reverence."

> And, whan that it is eve, I renné blithe,
> As sone as ever the sunne ginneth west,
> To sene this floure how it woll go to rest.
>
> ver. 60.

The season of the poem is the first of May. The author has been through the whole day employed in watching this favoured production of nature, and at night falls asleep in an arbour where he dreams that he is similarly engaged. In this situation, kneeling upon the ground, supported by his elbow, and gazing with never-wearied attention upon "this floure white and rede," he is surprised by Cupid and Alcestis, and the scene follows which has already been mentioned. It is in this poem that Chaucer supplies us with his etymology of daisy, which he explains to mean the *eye of day*.

Botany of the daisy.

It is somewhat singular, that the flower selected by the poets of the fourteenth century as the object of their amorous worship, should be that which modern botanists have fixed upon as the most consummate and superb of the various classes of these beautiful ornaments of nature. While the lily, the tulip, the rose, and others

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more calculated to fix the attention of an indolent spectator, are comparatively simple, the daisy, as they remark[7], modest and unpretending in its appearance, seems to be one, but in reality contains in a single calix two or three hundred flowers, each having separately its corolla, its germ, its pistil, its stamina and its seed. Such is the true description of the various members of the circle of white foliage which forms as it were its exterior garland, and of the orange-coloured cylindrical shoots which compose the body or centre of the flower. Both the one and the other, though seemingly single, are actually hollow, and contain in their cavity every essential provision for multiplying their kind. It is remarkable that Chaucer, in amplifying the praises of the object of his panegyric, falls almost into the terms of botanical science. Speaking of Alcestis, who was "clad in roiall habite grene," with a garland of fine oriental pearls, and, above that, a fret of gold, upon her head[8], he says,

For all so many virtues haddé she
As smal florounés in her chaplet be:
In remembraunce of her,—
Cybilla made the daiesie and the flour,
Icrowned al with white,—
And Mars yave her a corowne red, [a] pardé,
In stede of rubies set among the white.

ver. 528.

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[7] Rousseau, Lettres Elémentaires sur la Botanique: Lettre VI.

[8] This dress is fancied, to give Alcestis an appearance somewhat resembling that of the daisy.

[a] by God, by heavens. This expression in Chaucer is merely expletive.

1382. Poetical exaggeration.

After all, the daisy must be confessed to be an inadequate emblem of that object which is to excite the transports and enthusiasm of a poet's mind. It has in the first place the disadvantage of being the most common and trivial of flowers: and such is the structure of the human mind, that the thing which is not somewhat rare cannot much be admired. If every man we met were a man of original powers of mind, genius would cease to call forth our wonder. If the whole female sex were illustriously fair and beautiful, beauty itself would come to be regarded with indifference. The daisy is besides a humble plant; it assumes no state, and inspires no awe. It cannot boast any particular freshness of hue, or glow of tint. It has no odour; or, if it has odour, certainly no perfume.

All these defects however are supplied by the wantonness of the poet's fancy. If Chaucer's panegyric of the daisy were read in some distant climate, where the species itself was unknown, the reader would form to himself the most exalted and luxurious ideas of its excellence:

As she that is of all floures the floure,
Fulfilled of all vertue and honoure;
And ever ylike faire and fresh of hewe,
As wel in winter, as in summer, newe.

ver. 53.

And again,

Of soche swetnesse and soche odour oer all,
That, for to speke of gomme or herbe or tre,
Comparison may none ymaked be;

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For it surmounteth plainly all odoures,
And of riche beauté the most gaye of floures.

ver. 120.

The original of the Floure and the Lefe written by a lady.

One circumstance worthy to be noticed occurs in the poem of the Floure and the Lefe. In the rubric of the work in the old copies, the subject is stated thus: "A gentlewoman, out of an arbour in a groue, seeth a great company of knights and ladies, &c." In like manner Dryden has entitled his version of this poem, "The Flower and the Leaf: or, The Lady in the Arbour." This is sufficiently authorised in the body of the performance; since the lady who explains to the author the meaning of the various objects which present themselves, three times in Chaucer employs the vocative address, "my doughter[b]." There is nothing in the nature of the objects seen that should make it less proper for the beholder to be a man than a woman; and the early walk with which the poem commences, the author setting out upon a solitary ramble at three hours after midnight[c], seems best to suit the hardier and more adventurous sex. The most natural solution of the difficulty is, that the author of the original poem, for the work in Chaucer has the air of a translation, was a woman. And in that case we are here presented with perhaps the first example which occurs in the history of modern literature, of a lady having been the writer of a work of invention of so considerable extent.

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[b] ver. 462, 500, 547.

[c] ver. 24.

1382.

In Pasquier[d] and Fauchet[e] we meet indeed with a poetess of the thirteenth century, called Marie de France, who translated into French verse the Fables of Esop, and certain Lays, or polite tales, which appear to have been the growth of the province of Britanny, and to have been originally written in the Armorican language[f]. Both these productions are to be found in the same volume in the British Museum[g].

Poetry of the reign of Charles V. of France.

Having had occasion in this chapter to mention Froissart as a poet, it may not be improper, before we pass to another subject, to advert to a further particular of his fame. He is treated by Pasquier, in his *Recherches de la France*[h], as the founder of a new species of poetry; such as the chant-royal, the ballad, the pastoral and the rondeau: or at least this class of poetical compositions is represented by that writer as contemporary with Froissart, and the growth of the reign of Charles V. Pasquier describes the French poetry as having declined for some time previously to that era; the writers in the vulgar tongue having ceased to produce new romances, or heroic tales in verse, and amusing themselves with clothing such as they already possessed, in the garb of prose. After some interval however, the spirit of verse again descended upon the nation; and this revival of poetry was distinguished by the introduction of these lighter and shorter forms of composition, which the writer whom we are quoting distinguishes by the

[d] Liv. VIII, Chap. i.

[e] Liv. II, Chap. lxxxiv.

[f] Tyrwhit, Discourse, note 24.

[g] Ms. Harleian. No. 978.

[h] Liv. VII, Chap. v.

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appellation of *mignardises*, pretty, delicate or quaint schemes of versification.

1382.

Origin of the shorter and more airy classes of poetry.

We have already seen that the principal part of the poetry of the twelfth, and the earlier part of the thirteenth, centuries, consisted of romances or the relation of heroic adventures, tales or narratives of a lighter description, *tensons* or pleas in verse, and *sirventes* or the overflowings of a satirical humour [i]. Allegorical poetry was introduced in or near the time of William de Lorris. If the poetical effusions of our European ancestors had always hitherto been works of length, and the age of Froissart and Charles V. gave birth to those shorter and more airy productions of fancy, where the sense of the author is shut up within the compass of a few lines, this would give a further distinctness to the eras of modern poetical history, pleasing to the imagination, and perspicuous and helpful to the memory.

Song.

This arrangement however cannot be admitted but with considerable limitation. Song is the native of every country, and almost coeval with speech itself. The romances of our minstrels indeed were long histories, consisting often of several hundred stanzas; and, though sung, must from their length have been performed in a sort of recitative, with scarcely any thing of what we now denominate air. But when, in consequence of the invention of the time-table, air became introduced [k], short pieces of poetry, adapted to that species of musical execution, must have been written. Many examples of this

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[i] Vol. I, Chap. XI, p. 219.

[k] Vol. I, Chap. IX, p. 180.

kind of composition are still preserved. The drinking song of Walter Mapes[l] is of this sort; and the song, said to have been sung in parts by Blondel and our Richard I. on a memorable occasion[m], appears to have been a short composition. The Sonnet, which Petrarca raised to such a height of reputation, and which all other European nations have borrowed from the Italian, was the growth of the thirteenth century[n]. It is not therefore without considerable qualification, that *mignardises*, or the lighter specimens of poetry, can be understood to be the growth of the age of Charles V.

Sonnet.

Chant-royal.

Froissart's shorter pieces are variously denominated *Laies*, *Virelaies*, *Balades*, *Chants-royaux*, *Pastourelles* and *Rondeaux*. The *Chant-royal* is defined by Pasquier to be a composition upon some religious or devotional subject, comprised in five stanzas of eleven lines each; the last line of all the stanzas, called the *refrain* or burthen, to be the same; and the whole composition closed with a *renvoi* or epilogue, consisting of about five lines, in the nature of a dedication. The origin of this sort of dedication he ascribes to the Floral Games of this age, in which several poets contended for superiority in the art of verse, and the successful candidate received, as a prize, a garland of artificial flowers formed of the precious metals. The different pretenders, eager to conciliate the favour of him whose office it was to adjudge the reward, and who was denominated the king of the games, were accustomed to add a supernumerary stanza

[l] Inserted in Camden, Remains: rythmes.

[m] Percy, Reliques of Ancient English Poetry: Essay on Minstrels, Sect. iv.

[n] Vol. I, Chap. XI, p. 222.

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Balade. to their production, consecrated to the celebrating his praise, or deprecating his censure. The *Balade* Pasquier defines to be a *Demi-chant-royal*, or *Chant-royal* on a smaller scale, the stanzas, and sometimes the lines, being of briefer dimension, and the subject less elevated.

Rondeau. The *Rondeau* is defined by Johnson[o], and this definition coincides with the example in Pasquier, to consist of "thirteen verses," disposed according to a certain rule, "of which eight have one rhyme, and five another; it is divided into three couplets [he means stanzas], and, at the end of the second and third, the beginning of the Rondeau is repeated, in an equivocal sense, if possible." There is a specimen of an ancient Rondeau in Ste. Palaye, consisting of a smaller number of verses[p].

Pastourelle. The *Pastourelle*, as written by Froissart, of which there is also an example in Ste. Palaye[p], is not, like the classes of poetry already described, subject to any particular scheme of versification: it is a rural dialogue or scene, like those of Theocritus and Virgil, and written in octosyllabic measure.

References to these classes of poetry in the writings of Chaucer. If the system of Pasquier were well founded, we should then be supplied with a new internal evidence, assisting us in arranging the chronology of Chaucer's works; as in that case the pieces in which the names of those schemes of versification enumerated by the historian occur, would be ascertained to belong to the latter part of the poet's life. I will put together in this place such examples as

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[o] Johnson, Dictionary of the English Language, in voc.

[p] Memoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions, Tom. XIV: Notice des Poesies de Froissart, par Ste. Palaye.

offer themselves of the recurrence of these names. The Roundell is mentioned in the poem of the Floure and the Lefe, one of the attendants being introduced who CHAP. XLIV. 1382.

> — began a Roundel lustily,
> And than the company' answer'd all,
> With voices swete entun'd and small.
>
> ver. 176.

In like manner, in the Legende of Gode Women, Chaucer enumerates among his writings

> Many an hymné for your holy daies,
> That highten Balades, Rondels, Virelaies:
>
> ver. 422.

And a personage in one of the Canterbury Tales is spoken of, who of love

> made many Layes,
> Songés, Complaintés, Roundels, Virelayes.
>
> ver. 11259.

The Bargaret [*bergerette*] or Pastoral, is likewise mentioned in the Floure and the Lefe; for, as one of the attendants of Diana the lady of the Leaf, had begun a Roundel, so a follower of Flora the lady of the Flower, sang

> right womanly
> A Bargaret in praising the daisie.
>
> ver. 347.

Some instances however there are which do not exactly accord with Pasquier's hypothesis. The Ballad (as well as the Virelay, an appellation which occurs in Froissart, and

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has been supposed not to be older than his poems) is named in the poem entitled Chaucer's Dream written on occasion of John of Gaunt's first marriage in 1359. Thus the birds, who hovered about the navy of Cupid,

> on the shippés bounds about
> Ysate and song with voyce full out
> Ballades and Layes.
>
> ver. 713.

Virelay.

And afterward,

> And there toke lodging every knight,
> Was none departed of that night;
> And some to reden old romances,
> Them occupied for their plesances;
> Some to make Virelaies and Laies;
> And some to other diverse plaies.
>
> ver. 969.

Mr. Tyrwhit conjectures[a], and perhaps truly, that a short piece printed in Chaucer's works, which is as follows, may be taken as an example of the Virelay:

> ALONE walkyng, in thought plainyng,
> And sore sighyng, all desolate;
> Me remembryng of my livyng;
> My deth wishyng, bothe erly and late:
>
> Infortunate is so my fate,
> That, wot ye what? Out of mesure
> My life I hate; thus desperate,
> In soche pore state, do I endure:

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[a] Account of the Works of Chaucer, prefixed to Glossary.

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Of other cure am I not sure:—
Thus to endure is hard certain.
Suche is my [r] ure, I you ensure;
What créature may have more pain?

My truthe so plain is take in vain,
And grete [s] disdain in remembraunce.
[t] Yet I full faine would me complaine
Me to abstaine from this penaunce,

But [u] in substaunce none allegeaunce
Of my grevaunce can I not finde;
Right so my chaunce [x] with displeasaunce
Doeth me avaunce: And thus an ende.

This piece seemed to deserve to be inserted at length on account of the happy vein of nature, simplicity and pathos, that pervades it: and it would have been scarcely just to have closed the analysis of Chaucer's poems, without producing one specimen of his manner of exhibiting his talent in these briefer and lighter species of composition.

Froissart is one of those eminent literary characters who might have been mentioned in a former chapter, the patronage of whom did especial credit to the judgment and liberality of Edward III. and his queen [y].

William de Machaut.

Another eminent French poet contemporary with Chau-

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[r] use, habitual situation. [s] displeasure cherished against me.

[t] I believe Chaucer wrote this couplet thus:
Yet I full faine would me abstaine
Thus to complaine in this penaunce.

[u] no substantial relief. [x] drives me on from misfortune to misfortune.

[y] Chronique de Froissart.

CHAP. XLIV. 1382. cer, is William de Machaut, whose life has been written by count Caylus[z]. Like Froissart, he was a writer of Chançons-royaux, Ballads, Laies and Virelaies; and, if we had an opportunity of studying his works, which have never been printed, we might perhaps find that he was the inventor of several of these shorter kinds of metrical composition, as well as of the worship of the daisy, which is commemorated in his writings. He was a native of Champagne, and was born certainly earlier than the year 1290. He tells us of himself that he was thirty years secretary to John king of Bohemia, the blind sovereign who was killed in the battle of Cressy in 1346, and from whose device, found on that occasion, the princes of Wales, from Edward the Black Prince, have taken their crest of three ostrich feathers with its motto. William de Machaut, with a constancy of affection which claims our highest respect, took every occasion, to the latest hour of his life, of celebrating the worth and accomplishments of his royal patron. This poet is judged by his biographer to have been a person of some rank; and one of his pieces is descriptive of his amours with a princess, which he professes himself reluctant thus to expose to the world, but which he has related in obedience to her express injunction. Another of his productions is entitled *Le Dit du Lion*, and was perhaps the original of Chaucer's poem, entitled the Book of the Lion[a], now lost. As Chaucer was several times in

[z] Memoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions, Tom. XX.

[a] Lydgate, Fall of Princes, Prologue, stanza 46. Retraction, annexed to the Canterbury Tales. Tyrwhit, note in loc.

France, it is not improbable that he was personally acquainted with a poet so celebrated in his time as William de Machaut appears to have been. One of Machaut's longest works was written after 1370, and must therefore have been composed when he was more than eighty years of age [b]. CHAP. XLIV. 1382.

Chaucer appointed comptroller of the small customs.

On the eighth of May Chaucer received, in addition to his office of comptroller of the customs upon wools and skins introduced into the port of London, a further grant of the office of comptroller of small customs in the same port, to be discharged by himself or a sufficient deputy of his own appointment [c]. This boon we may suppose to have been conferred upon him at the request of Anne of Bohemia, and to have been the pledge by which she engaged him in her service, and constituted him her poet.

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[b] Le Beuf, Notice Sommaire de Deux Volumes de Poesies, apud Memoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions, Tom. XX.

[c] Appendix, No.

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RICHARD II. ASSUMES THE GOVERNMENT.—HIS CONFIDENTIAL MINISTERS.—SIR SIMON BURLEY.—VERE EARL OF OXFORD.—SIR MICHAEL DE LA POLE.—THEIR PRODIGALITY AND AMBITION.—THEIR ANIMOSITY TO THE KING OF CASTILLE.

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RICHARD II. being now a husband, and installed in the faculties and immunities of a man, it was natural that he should be eager to put a close to his period of pupillage. The government had been hitherto of a nature anomalous and difficult to be defined: there had been no regent; the king appears often to have presided in person in the councils of state; and, as there was no individual delegated to represent him, he was habituated on solemn occasions to personate the functions of royalty, and to be set forth to public view as if he were essentially a king. He was tutored to speak the words which were dictated to his youthful organs, and to assume the gestures of authority or of grace. Thus he was in a certain sense, no very substantial one indeed, educated to reign; and it would perhaps appear to himself and to those about him an easy gradation for him to slide from the exhibition, to the direct exercise, of sovereign authority.

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This change could not have been more favourably prepared than by the part which he had spontaneously taken during the late insurrection.

In the autumn of the year rendered memorable by these convulsions, the parliament which sat at Westminster, and whose proceedings had been disturbed by the dissensions of John of Gaunt and the earl of Northumberland, trod in the steps of their predecessors in treating the king as a minor. Among various measures adopted by them, they named Richard Fitz-Alan, earl of Arundel and one of the committee of government appointed by the Good Parliament, and sir Michael de la Pole, to be about the king's person for council in governing him; and nominated sir Richard le Scrope, a man of character and unblemished reputation and a friend of Chaucer, to be chancellor of the realm[a]. This statesman had in a former instance occupied this high station, and, at the time when the clergy were excluded from the great offices of government on parliamentary petition, had been appointed lord treasurer.

Sir Richard le Scrope dismissed from the office of chancellor.

One of the first acts of personal authority of Richard II. on record, is the taking the seals from sir Richard le Scrope in July of the present year[b].

Early character of Richard II.

This monarch is one of the most unfortunate in the catalogue of our English sovereigns. He was beautiful in his person, magnificent in his temper, and courageous in the best of his dispositions. But he was wayward, fickle and headstrong. His fickleness however by no means influenced him in his personal attachments. His

His affectionate temper.

[a] Cotton, ubi sup.

[b] Rymer, 6 Ric. 2, Jul. 11.

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persevering affection to Anne of Bohemia his queen, and to Robert Vere his favourite companion and confident, may place him among the most distinguished models of entire friendship and love. He was a faithful associate and a blameless husband. To each of the persons just named he manifested a perfect and unalterable attachment in life and after their death. When his queen was no more, he deserted and demolished the palace of Shene in which she expired, leaving its magnificent ruins a striking monument of the sincerity and constancy of his love[c]. And, when his favourite died in banishment in the Netherlands, he indulged himself in the luxury of bringing over to England his remains; and resolved at least to shed the tears of affection at the funeral of the man, whose society the resentment of contending factions, and the favourite's excesses and crimes, would not permit him to enjoy while he lived[d]. This funeral appears to have taken place three years after the death of Vere, and above eight subsequently to the time of his banishment: if therefore we cannot applaud the judgment, the conduct, or the firmness of Richard, we shall at least be constrained to acknowledge in him some of the attributes which are most lovely in man.

Imbecility of his disposition.

He was however in several of the most memorable situations of his reign singularly fickle and wayward. In the conduct which his reason dictated to him he was altogether without perseverance. He was through life the sort of being we are accustomed to figure to ourselves as a

[c] Hollinshed and Stow, A. D. 1394. [d] Walsingham, A. D. 1395.

spoiled child; so true a lover of indulgence and ease, that, with whatever spirit he entered upon an arduous undertaking, the first difficulty discouraged, or the first temptation seduced him from his course. He had no just sense of the dignity of a resolute spirit, or the beauty of virtuous discrimination. He was therefore a most apt tool in the hands of courtiers, to accomplish their crooked designs or to gratify their unlicensed ambition, to oppress the brave or to lay snares for the incorrupt and sincere. These were the qualities which effected his ruin. In times so factious and turbulent as those in which he lived, no man could tranquilly enjoy the highest station in society, without some features of character which should command personal respect and awe.

Advantages with which he began his career.

It is impossible to say exactly what circumstance in the early history of Richard was the first cause of his unhappy catastrophe. He had before him what may with sufficient propriety be styled excellent models, in his father and grandfather. His mother, who lived till he was in his nineteenth year, was of a character to command the respect of her contemporaries and posterity. His queen was always blameless and always popular; and, judging from the partiality she displayed for the principles of Wicliffe, we may conclude that she was not deficient in activity and vigour of mind [e].

His education.

Some historians have insinuated that the uncles of the king took care that his intellectual powers should derive no advantage from the discipline of an enlightened and manly

[e] Lewis, Life of Wicliffe, Chap. X. Sect. v.

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education. But this seems to be merely a conjecture, resting upon no foundation of fact. He had for the governor of his youth sir Guichard Dangle earl of Huntingdon, who died in the close of the preceding year [f], and whom we have seen to have been a man of uncommon endowments, and high moral and military character. This nobleman might neglect the duties of his function, and, by an injudicious indulgence, so easily insinuating itself into the direction of a youth of the highest rank, have ruined the temper of his pupil's mind: but he was not a man to be chosen for that express purpose.

His confidential ministers.

Two of the individuals who engrossed most of the intercourse of Richard, and to whom he was considerably, though not equally, attached, were sir Simon Burley, and Robert Vere earl of Oxford. They were persons who, at least in a superficial view, were every way proper for the confidence which they enjoyed. The former of these was the

Sir Simon Burley.

nephew of Walter Burley, one of the most eminent schoolmen of the age, and who had been successively concerned in the education both of Edward III. [g] and of the Black Prince [h]. Sir Simon had himself been brought up from his childhood as the companion and fellow student of the hero of Poitiers, and was particularly recommended by the illustious warrior in the close of his life, to be about the person of his son [h]. No choice could appear to be more happy. Sir Simon Burley had gained reputation in the wars of Edward III, was regarded as a man of the strictest

[f] Froissart, Chap. lxxix.

[g] Vol. I, Chap. XIX, p. 384.

[h] Hollinshed, A. D. 1377.

integrity and honour, and must have been impressed with a sort of hereditary attachment to the youthful king. As having been the fellow student of the Black Prince, he must be understood to have been nearly of the same standing in life, and, at the period we are considering, to have arrived at the age of fifty. His experience therefore qualified him for a monitor, while the relation in which he had stood to the deceased warrior gave him the weight and tenderness as of a kinsman. The gravity of his years might well have induced a belief, that he was too old to sacrifice the honours of a well spent life, and that even the beams of royal favour and all-conquering ambition would not have the power to dissolve his integrity. The attachment however of sir Simon Burley was of no advantage to Richard. He forgot what he owed to his first friend, the associate of his boyish pursuits, and who had intrusted to him his dearest pledge on earth. He entered into the cabals of the youthful courtiers and forwarded their sinister and unlicensed projects, that together with them he might govern the kingdom without censor or control; at the same time that by a strange inconsistency he involved his master in unpopularity and odium by the pride of his temper, and the unbending stateliness of his demeanour[i].

Vere earl of Oxford.

Vere, the coadjutor of sir Simon Burley, and who was emphatically the favourite of Richard, was the lineal representative of one of the oldest families in the kingdom. His ancestor had been created earl of Oxford in the time of king Stephen, and the intermediate possessors of the

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[i] Walsingham, A. D. 1388. Stow, A. D. 1381.

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title were, several of them, men of distinguished merit. One of the dangers to be apprehended in the youth of a person of exalted station, is that he should fall into the society of low persons, who should have no other principle than to flatter his caprices and pamper his appetites. In this point of view it seemed to be advantageous that Richard should have for his confident a young man of high rank, and only five years older than himself[k]. But the event proved otherwise. Vere did not degenerate from the gallant spirit of his race, and was perhaps not without attachment to his sovereign. He was a young man of high spirit and ambition, but of slender capacity. He felt the advantage he possessed in the absolute control of his sovereign, and was resolved hardily to overstep every inferior obstacle which might oppose the gratification of his inclinations. He sought to combine the discordant characters of the voluptuary and the statesman. Under a gay countenance, open, confident and assured, he masked the thoughts of a conspirator and an assassin. There is a considerable resemblance between Vere the favourite of Richard, and Carr the minion of James I: with these advantages in favour of the former, that he was of an ancient family, and Carr an upstart; and that it was natural that a young man of twenty should obtain the ascendancy over a boy of fifteen, but exceedingly preposterous that he should engross the same degree of empire over a royal pedant of the age of fifty.

Sir Michael de la Pole.

A third statesman was called to share the secret councils

[k] Dugdale, Baronage, art. Vere.

of the stripling monarch. This was no other than sir Michael de la Pole, who had contrived to be joined by the parliament of the preceding autumn with the earl of Arundel, one of the first nobles of the realm, as a proper person to superintend the royal councils. He was the son of the opulent merchant formerly mentioned, who had ruined himself by his loans to Edward III. in his wars[l]. That monarch, as some compensation to the father, had taken the youth under his protection; and sir Michael appears to have served with credit during several campaigns. He was a man of ability, calculation and industry; infected neither with the pride of sir Simon Burley, nor the rash and extravagant confidence of the earl of Oxford. He believed that, while he connected himself with these two men, he could take advantage of the defects of each, and use them both as tools for the attainment of his ends. Having no passions himself, he was cautious and inflexible in the pursuit of his purposes; and being greatly inferior to his associates in insinuation and accomplishments, he readily yielded to them the immediate kindness of Richard, provided he were admitted to a full share of the benefits to be extorted from that kindness.

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Their offensive proceedings.

These three courtiers immediately exposed themselves to general hatred, by their eagerness to share the spoils of government. Sir Michael de la Pole, a few months after the dismission of Scrope, took upon him the office of chancellor[m]. Sir Simon Burley obtained for himself, his father and his nephew, the honorary distinction of the

[l] Vol. I, Chap. I, p. 10.

[m] Rymer, 6 Ric. 2, Mar. 10.

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order of the Garter. Upon him and his father this badge must have been conferred in the present year; since he appears in the catalogue of knights as the senior of the two, and his father died in the year following [n]. Vere obtained in marriage the grand-daughter of Edward III. by Isabella countess of Bedford, his eldest daughter; yet, not contented with this splendid alliance, he shortly after, to the great scandal of the nobility and princes of the blood royal, put her away, that he might marry a Bohemian, a woman of plebeian extraction and an attendant upon the queen [o]. He also received a grant of Queenborough Castle [p], a palace which had been especially built for Edward III. by William of Wykeham [q].

Their pernicious counsels.

The history of bad ministers who have gained possession of the confidence of a young and thoughtless monarch has been an hundred times related, and in its principal circumstances is always the same. The present advisers of

[n] In Vol. I, Chap. XIX, I have spoken of the three Burleys, knights of the Garter, as nephews of Dr. Walter Burley, the Perspicuous Schoolman. I here take the opportunity of correcting this error, from some memorandums, collected, and obligingly communicated to me, by the reverend James Dallaway, of the Heralds' College, who has obtained a grant to bear the arms of the Burleys, as being descended from them in the female line. From his collections it appears that sir John Burley, 78th knight of the Garter, was the brother of the doctor, and died in 1383; that sir Simon, 76th knight of the Garter, was the eldest son of sir John; and sir Richard, 80th knight of the Garter, his grandson, by sir Roger his second son. Sir Richard Burley was in the expedition of John of Gaunt to Spain in 1386, was appointed by him marshal of the field, and lost his life at the siege of Arpent in 1389. In this connection with the nephew, we are presented with an additional example of the placable temper of the king of Castille.

[o] Walsingham, A. D. 1387.

[p] Dugdale, ubi supra.

[q] Lowth, Sect. 1.

Richard II. had many purposes of their own into which they could not expect their master zealously to enter, and were satisfied that he should give as little attention as possible to public affairs. The principal lesson they enjoined upon him in this respect was, that it would be degrading in him to brook restraint, or to listen to the grave and unpalatable suggestions either of the parliament, of his uncles, or of the experienced statesmen who had served under his father and grandfather. They told him that his was the age of pleasure, and urged him to seize the passing hour. They enumerated the advantages he enjoyed, of youth, and health, and a station which they represented as above control. The earl of Huntingdon his governor, it may be, had urged upon him his duties, and exhorted him to the cultivation of his mind; had painted to him the necessity of patience and self-denial, of inuring his body to hardships, and his understanding to strict and unwearied application. These were the lessons of grey hairs, eager to deprive others of the pleasures they were themselves unable to enjoy. He might well leave the cares of state to his friends, and would do wisely to regard business and affairs as irksome intruders. He would sufficiently discharge what he owed to his station, if by the splendour of his state he inspired his subjects with awe and admiration, and foreigners who visited his court, with respect.

Prodigality of the youthful monarch.

These lessons found a ready listener in the youthful Richard. Stories of insulting language are related of him toward his parliaments, which, though perhaps exaggerated, may be admitted as evidences of the bent of his demeanour. In the mean time the profusion of his establishment was

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such as to excite the astonishment of every beholder. Some particulars of this nature have been handed down to us with a characteristic simplicity by a rhymer of the fourteenth century who has already been quoted[r]. From his account it appears that ten thousand was the usual number of the persons who dined in the royal houshold, whose messes were served out to them by three hundred attendants. The chambermaids and laundresses were to the number of three hundred. Richard also took a pride in the rich array of his retainers and followers, which was much more costly than before or since his time. He seems to have felt a particular pleasure in the attendance of prelates and clergymen, whom, according to the author we are quoting, he assembled from England, Ireland, France and Bohemia; men who had little skill in their discourses to expound high matters of religion, or in music honourably to advance the service of God, but who surpassed the military, and the unsanctified frequenters of the court, in adultery and all the arts of female seduction.

Situation of the king of Castille.

It particularly belonged to the king of Castille to check this dishonourable and licentious riot. We may imagine with what thoughts he contemplated the new and unusual character that was growing up in the English court. England was his country; and so truly did he feel it to be such, that he was long after quoted as the model of an English character. Plantagenet was his name; and, as every thing affects the human heart more deeply, the more nearly it approaches to ourselves, we

[r] Hardyng, Chap. 194.

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may be certain that he was singularly anxious for the virtue and prosperity of the representative of his house. In Richard he saw all that survived of his father and his elder brother; and we might have believed, even if he had not a thousand times protested it, that he was ready to make any sacrifice to the interest of his nephew. The king of Castille had been, and still was, magnificent and expensive: but his disbursements were in a very different style from those of Richard. In every thing he consulted his ideas of propriety; his expences were directed to ends of dignity, and regulated by his conceptions of public usefulness. The expences of Richard were wild and wasteful, calculated to breed contempt and not respect, and inspiring into the spectators, as is evident from all the writers of that age, a deep and galling sense of the public burthens by which the royal prodigality was sustained. Richard assembled round him from every profession and class in society the persons who were the disgrace of that profession and class: John of Gaunt, by his munificence and the liberality of his disposition, assembled round him those who for their talents and acquirements were the wonders of their age, the bishop of Limoges, the Franciscan philosopher who perished in the late insurrection, Wicliffe and Chaucer.

Nature of his magnificence.

compared with that of Richard.

The king of Castille was the individual whom every circumstance pointed out as him to whom it belonged to save the king and the kingdom from the calamities into which they were about to be plunged: his age, his quality of eldest uncle to Richard, his experience, his high military character, and the political station he had held during the last ten years of Edward III, when he had been in almost

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every thing but name the regent of the kingdom. Even his want of ambition, which by some historians has been denominated want of enterprise, rendered him fitter for the task which now seemed to devolve to him.

Animosity of the king's favourites against him.

But, if he were the individual in England to whom it belonged to redress grievances and check abuses, we may easily believe that no persons were quicker to discern this circumstance than the confidential advisers of the deluded Richard. Accordingly, a principal object of their politics was to anticipate the opposition of the king of Castille, and to cripple his efforts. William of Wykeham and the faction which dictated the measures of the Good Parliament had fortunately paved their way to this object; and they pursued it with such industry, as ultimately to endeavour by a public trial and execution to remove the individual whose virtues they feared. We shall speedily have occasion to relate their machinations.

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PROGRESS OF WICLIFFE.—TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE.—CONTROVERSY OF THE REAL PRESENCE.—POLICY OF THE KING OF CASTILLE.—OF COURTENEY ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.—WICLIFFE EXPELLED THE UNIVERSITY.—TEMPER OF THE KING OF CASTILLE ILLUSTRATED.

AN important crisis was this year brought on in English affairs by the contentions which arose respecting the tenets of Wicliffe. We have seen the first strenuous attempt which was made to crush the spirit of religious innovation in the last year of the reign of Edward III. An injunction had been framed by the English hierarchy, forbidding the further dissemination of the doctrines of this celebrated reformer. But the injunction had been issued under circumstances particularly unfavourable to its efficacy; and the intrepid spirit of Wicliffe taught him to regard it with contempt. CHAP. XLVI.

The clergy however, and Courteney bishop of London in particular, were not to be diverted from their purpose. To give additional solemnity to their further proceedings, they applied to the pope; they transmitted to him nineteen heretical and erroneous propositions, really and pretendedly 1377. Bulls of pope Gregory XI.

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drawn from the writings of Wicliffe [a], and obtained in return five bulls, addressed to the archbishop of Canterbury, to the bishop of London, to Edward III. who was still living, and to the university of Oxford, and having for their object the suppression of the opinions of Wicliffe, the imprisoning him, the compelling him to renounce his errors, and the citing him personally to appear before the sovereign pontiff [a]. These bulls were dated on the twenty-second of May; and, having arrived in England about the period of the old king's death, the solemn public proceedings upon them were deferred till the following spring.

Wicliffe favoured by the university of Oxford.

The further the prosecution against Wicliffe was urged, the more evident did it become how deeply his tenets had taken root in England. The heads of the university of Oxford came to a solemn deliberation whether the bull directed to them should be received with honour, or rejected with disgrace; nor does it appear that it ever was received. The monastic writers, astonished at the audacity and irreverence of the university on this occasion, suddenly break off their narrative, professing themselves unwilling to remember, against an institution meriting so highly of the Christian world, a scene so little worthy of its general character for orthodoxy and catholicism [b].

1378. Cited before the bishops at Lambeth.

Wicliffe was a second time summoned to appear before the heads of the church of England at Lambeth in the beginning of 1378 [a]; and, from the time of the year in this as well as

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[a] Walsingham, A. D. 1378.

[b] Walsingham, and Wood, Antiq. Oxon. A. D. 1378.

1378. His popularity.

the former instance, we seem authorised to conclude that his judges were the upper house of convocation. It is not very certain whether he obeyed on this occasion the citation he received. The populace of London appear to have been strongly prepossessed in his favour; though, in the obscure and improbable story which is related of the preceding year, they are represented as having committed various excesses against his patrons and abettors. They now besieged the house in which his prosecutors were assembled, and some of them, having forced the doors and obtained entrance, began to harangue the prelacy in his favour. In the midst of this confusion sir Lewis Clifford, a gentleman of the houshold to the dowager princess of Wales, arrived, and delivered a verbal order from his mistress, forbidding the bishops to proceed to any definitive sentence against Wicliffe[c]. Perplexed at once by the tumultuous cries of the populace, and this equivocal and extraordinary interposition of authority, the meeting broke up abruptly without coming to any decision. News of the death of pope Gregory XI. immediately after arrived, and superseded further proceedings, by putting an end to the authority upon which they were founded. It was on occasion of the death of pope Gregory, that what is known in ecclesiastical history by the name of the Grand Schism commenced, two or more pretenders constantly advancing their claim to the papal throne; an anarchy which was not terminated till forty years after, by the council of Constance.

Protected by the princess of Wales.

Grand Schism.

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[c] Walsingham, ad ann.

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Favourable situation of Wicliffe.

This sort of inefficient and impotent persecution was not calculated to overawe the intrepid spirit of Wicliffe: it on the contrary tended to encourage his efforts. It is of the nature of all bold and irregular attempts at reformation, to destroy in their authors and abettors the habitual respect which had previously prevailed for the authorities they would reform. The expression of disapprobation and censure is not adapted to arrest their progress. This rather affords them food for exultation, and countenances them in the opinion they had previously cherished, that the established authorities are grown feeble and powerless.

He resolves to improve it.

A variety of circumstances now favoured the career of Wicliffe: the schism of the church, the countenance he had received from the great, and the open favour which his doctrines obtained from the multitude. The hierarchy of the church of England had attempted to suppress his principles, and had been found incompetent. In the interval which he thus obtained, the great reformer began seriously to meditate respecting the next enterprise in which he should engage. He would have deemed himself a criminal deserter from the cause of God and of truth, if he had suffered so favourable an opportunity to pass unimproved. He was not regardless of that great principle in mankind collectively considered, that in daring and difficult enterprises all pause is fatal; and that, if we would act successfully upon the passions, we must hurry on our adherents from point to point, continually reserving some new surprise, and from time to time resorting to this great instrument for keeping alive and exalting their fervour. Nothing can more strikingly illustrate the magnitude of Wicliffe's genius than the measures in which he now engaged.

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1380. Translation of the Bible.

The first of these, which he had for some time meditated, and which must have cost him no inconsiderable period in the execution, was the translation of the Bible. The success of his efforts was fated to depend upon popular impression; and nothing could be more exactly adapted to his purpose, than to lay before the whole people of England the materials which would enable them to judge between him and his antagonists. It was accident which had deprived the Christian world of the power of consulting the volumes which contained the records of their religion. The language in which those volumes principally existed at present, the Latin, had insensibly become a dead language; even the arts of writing and reading had gradually declined, and existed only in the possession of a few. But, though this withholding of the key of knowledge from the public at large was at first accidental, the clergy were not slow to perceive their advantage in it. While the sacred writings were accessible to all, every man was in some measure his own priest. Now the clergy had every thing in their power. They might teach whatever they pleased, or was best adapted to their interests, without fear of contradiction. All astonishment, all mysteries, all menace, were at their disposal; and, as far as the hopes of heaven and the fears of damnation had influence upon mankind, their empire was unbounded and absolute.

No two things could be more forcibly contrasted than the religion of the Holy Catholic church and the religion of the New Testament: the one all pomp and decoration, a gigantic system of policy, such as the world had never seen, stretching its mighty arms over all Christian states,

CHAP. XLVI. 1380. terrifying the people, and dictating to their rulers; the other humble, naked and undowered, its teachers without a roof to cover them, and its temper spiritual and abstracted from the temptations and advantages of this sublunary scene. The vulgar may, no doubt, be so trained as to find in every thing what their instructors dictate, to overlook contradictions, and to receive all absurdities as infallible truth. But for this purpose it is perhaps necessary that they should be accustomed from their infancy to the writings which are thus to be distorted, and that the sounds should be familiar before the sense can become a subject of enquiry. The sacred writings were now new to the Christian flock of the English pale; and, illustrated by the commentaries of Wicliffe and his associates, would not slide upon the ear so quietly, without impression and animadversion, as they might otherwise have done.

Exertions of Wicliffe and his associates.

The preaching of Wicliffe and his coadjutors was one incessant labour, unacquainted with either rest or fatigue. They passed from parish to parish and from county to county, every where instructing, informing and exhorting all who would listen to their discourses. They were clad, we are told, in the coarsest attire, and travelled barefoot [d]; circumstances designed to be emblematical of the holy simplicity of the doctrines they taught. Men came to mock them; but went away struck to the heart, overawed, humbled and converted. It is notorious what effects were produced by the Methodistical teachers of the eighteenth century. But the preachers of reformation at the time of

[d] Walsingham, A. D. 1377.

1380.

which we treat, were of a totally different class. They were masters of all the zeal and popular declamatory vein of their successors. Their zeal however was a deeper and more vigorous principle, as being combined with strong original powers of mind. At the same time that they arrested the attention and commanded the passions of the vulgar, they challenged the most refined to the contest; and it seems to be generally admitted that no one was found able to cope with them in the field of argumentation. Though the multitude are not qualified to be direct judges of the higher powers of intellect, and though they are often made the dupes of loquacious effrontery, yet there is something in true genius and sterling merit which, when skilfully employed for that purpose, will produce a more powerful and extraordinary effect even upon them, than ignorant assurance can ever reach.

1381. Controversy of the real presence.

Wicliffe's translation of the Bible appears to have been published in the year 1380 [e]: the following year witnessed a new assault made by him upon the established church [f]; it was directed against the doctrine of transubstantiation. This is the most extraordinary dogma in the history of human opinions; teaching that the bread which is eaten and the wine which is drunk under certain circumstances, are neither bread nor wine, but are strictly, literally and substantially, the flesh of the body of the man Jesus Christ, and the blood which he shed on the cross. Other mysteries may contain in them contradictions not less direct than this; but a doctrine which thus openly opposes the evidence of almost every one of our senses, has something in

[e] Lewis, Chap. V.

[f] Wood, ad ann.

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it which demanded a greater degree of ignorance and effrontery than any of these to gain it admission into the creed of mankind. Yet it is of the nature of a mystery of faith, that, when once it has obtained reception, the more gross and absurd it is, the more strenuously it is embraced, as affording a sublimer exercise for the imagination, and a more striking opportunity for the exertion of religious humility and submission. We might fancy that this, being a merely theoretical proposition, would excite little enthusiasm and zeal in its advocates. But the clergy understood their interests better. This has always, and justly, been regarded as a corner-stone of the Roman Catholic religion; the great triumph of faith, the test of a truly pious disposition in its adherents. It is of the highest importance, for the pride of human understanding to be subdued at the footstool of the church. The Romish hierarchy well knew, that he who had once in a truly devout temper received the doctrine of the real presence, might be considered as a pupil well disciplined and prepared to become a passive instrument in the hands of his religious superiors. The consideration however which made this doctrine dear to the Romish clergy, and fastened it upon the affections of the multitude, had no charms for Wicliffe. He came with a severe eye to spy out abuses; and what spoke only to the heart, and excited a tumult of pious emotions, met with no quarter from him. He was, as we have already said, in temper a puritan; and that poetical and impassioned colouring which changes as it were the face of nature, and causes objects to take their hue less from the mechanical refraction of rays than from the feelings of the spectator, had no place in his creed. Wicliffe un-

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doubtedly in no instance more clearly proved the depth of his views, than in selecting this fundamental doctrine of the church which had passed unquestioned for ages, as the topic of his concluding and decisive assault. The choice which he now made was perhaps the main spring of the reformation which took place one hundred and fifty years later; but it was too strong an experiment for the time at which it was made. The university of Oxford had hitherto supported Wicliffe in all his trials; it was considered as the very focus of heresy; but the attack which he made upon a mystery so sacred and sublime began to startle even his brethren of the university. A decree, condemning the doctrines which he began to propagate respecting the sacrament of the eucharist, and forbidding their further dissemination, was drawn up and signed by the chancellor, and twelve of the doctors, of the university [g]. The chancellor immediately repaired with this instrument to the school in which Wicliffe was expounding and maintaining his thesis upon the subject, and notified to him the determination of his superiors. The reformer was at first somewhat astonished; but, recovering himself, he, in reply to what he had heard, defied this officer or any of his assistants to answer his arguments. The chancellor, having performed the business upon which he came, departed in silence [h].

Wicliffe opposed by some of the heads of the university.

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[g] Wood, ad ann. The name of the chancellor was William de Berton, S. T. P. It was not till the middle of the sixteenth century that the custom was introduced of choosing some person of distinguished rank to bear the appellation of chancellor of the university, while the ecclesiastic who discharged the ordinary functions of the office bore the name of vice-chancellor. Wood, Fasti, apud Antiq. Oxon.

[h] Spelman, Concilia, ad ann.

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1382. Appeals to the king.

Wicliffe, by way of parrying the attack thus made upon him, signified his intention to appeal from his academical superiors to the king[i]. Some of his adversaries reproached him with a confession of the weakness of his cause, in thus referring the question to a secular authority, and owning that he could find no support in the bosom of the church. But in reality he was only following up the consequences of his own principle. The authority of the pope he disclaimed, and he knew it was against him. A great question had been agitated respecting the right of the bishops to interpose their jurisdiction in the university; and Wicliffe was far from being willing, by an appeal to them, to compromise the privileges of the body of which he was a member.

Solicits the support of the king of Castille.

It was the purpose of the reformer to submit his petition to the king in parliament. He knew what a numerous band of adherents he had in England, and he was desirous to have his cause tried in the face of the nation. Knighton, the monkish historian, assures us, that at this time, whoever met two men in the highway, would certainly find one of them to be a Lollard[k]. Meanwhile, Wicliffe was sensible that the present was a great crisis in the constitution of the church of England, and that it behoved him to solicit support from every quarter from which he could obtain it. He therefore privately applied to the king of Castille, to whose patronage he had already been so deeply indebted, for his support on the present occasion. The answer he received was a most unwelcome one; John of

and is refused.

[i] Wood, ad ann.

[k] Knighton, ad ann.

Gaunt advised him to withdraw from these thorny and dangerous contentions, and publicly to avow his submission to his ecclesiastical superiors [l].

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Probable motives of this refusal.

It is somewhat uncertain what was the motive which influenced the king of Castille in the present instance. His own situation was materially altered from what it had been when he so manfully stood forth in the cause of reformation. His political power was little; and the difficulties with which he had to struggle were many. The churchmen of the time had convinced him how deep and unrelenting was their animosity: he had just suffered in the most essential, and the tenderest points, from the excesses of Wat Tyler's insurgents, and the mysterious and distressing hostilities of the earl of Northumberland; and he perhaps foresaw the still blacker storm which was preparing to overwhelm him. Thus circumstanced, it would not be wonderful if he resolved to engage himself no further in the troubled sea of political warfare, or became convinced that, however eminent was his station, he could be of little real service to the man whom he honoured with his patronage.

1. The unprosperous situation of John of Gaunt.

Another motive which, it may be, influenced the king of Castille's proceeding on this occasion, was consideration for his nephew. We have seen how uniformly loyalty was in his breast one of his main principles of conduct. Richard is said to have been at first no enemy to Wicliffe; he made him his chaplain, and graced him with his royal favour [m]. Queen Anne of Bohemia had embraced the

2. the unhappy dispositions of Richard II.

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[l] Wood, ad ann.

[m] Lewis, Chap. X, Sect. vi.

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principles of the reformer, and, however she might abstain from publicly interfering in his behalf, appears constantly to have adhered to his party [n]. Under these circumstances, it seemed a very doubtful point whether the court might not openly take up his cause. What would then have been the situation of the young and unthinking sovereign? The whole power of the clergy would from that moment have become marshalled against him. His prospects and his fortune were sufficiently critical without this addition. He made himself enemies by his extravagance, enemies by the prodigal bounties which he heaped upon odious favourites, and enemies by the inconsiderate manner in which he entered into their resentments and conspiracies. By patronising Wicliffe he might bring upon himself sudden and irretrievable ruin; he was not a prince qualified to effect a great and beneficial revolution, or to operate a salutary change in any of the national establishments. John of Gaunt, anxious for his welfare, and that he might not embark in a perilous enterprise which could not come to good, perhaps advised him to stand neuter in the great struggle that impended; and set him the example.

3. the extreme to which Wicliffe proceeded.

which John of Gaunt might disapprove from views of piety,

It is possible also that the king of Castille was himself startled by Wicliffe's attack upon the doctrine of the eucharist. He is said, in speaking afterward of Wicliffe's sentiments upon that subject, to have treated them with considerable asperity as a doctrine of devils [o]. We find Chaucer also, in his Testament of Love [p], written after

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[n] Lewis, Chap. X, Sect. v.

[o] Wood, ad ann.

[p] Book II, Chap. ii.

this time, expressing himself with reverence of the belief of the real presence. A fixed principle of infidelity was extremely rare in the fourteenth century. The minds of mankind had been too thoroughly subdued under the empire of the church: they could indulge perhaps in a convivial jest or a gay satire upon things they had been taught to consider as sacred; but they could not sustain this profaneness in the prospect of death, nor had the firmness to digest it into an argumentative system. Nothing would seem more shocking in the judgment of a serious believer of that age, than to tell him that that which he had worshipped as a God was only a mouldy crust; and we ought rather to be surprised that Wicliffe found so many followers in his innovation, than that many regarded it as the excess of impiety.

Lastly, John of Gaunt, as we before remarked, embraced the cause of Wicliffe in the spirit of a statesman. He saw how much the incroachments of the church of Rome had trenched upon the integrity of the English government, and he deemed it an object worthy of his efforts to repel and put an end to these incroachments. Perhaps too he felt that the tyranny of the church had been hostile to the vigorous exertions of intellect; and, as a friend of literature, he desired its reform. Yet, as a statesman, he might hold the doctrine of the real presence too sacred to be disturbed. Religion is nothing, if it stop at a theoretical persuasion of the truth of certain propositions. It must become a vital principle, it must affect the heart and act upon the passions, before it can greatly modify the character of man in society. Hence John of Gaunt might infer the necessity of discountenancing an or of policy.

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attempt to strip it of its ornaments and its poetical character, and to reduce it to a mere affair of the understanding.

His humane and benevolent proceedings.

The conduct of John of Gaunt however on this occasion was conformable to the whole tenour of his life. Though he withdrew from the party of the reformers, he was no indifferent spectator of the persecutions which were carried on against them. He undertook to be the moderator between contending factions, and to repress the excesses of intolerant zeal. In particular, the industrious and elegant cultivators of science and intellect were always sure of his friendship. Dr. Nicholas Hereford, the most refined and virtuous of the adherents of Wicliffe, is said to have "escaped the bitterness of death [q]" through the interposition of the king of Castille; and even William de Swinderby, who seems to have been merely an unfortunate maniac, and who, being cited by Bokyngham bishop of Lincoln to appear before him in his cathedral, was adjudged to be "fit fuel for the fire [q]," owed his life to the accidental arrival of the same prince, who held among his various and extensive possessions the lordship of the castle of Lincoln. No Englishman was put to death for heresy during the life of the king of Castille.

Wicliffe was not discouraged by the repulse he received from his former patron. He had been animated by the favour of so important a personage; but, if that were withdrawn, he thought he might still rely upon the extensive party he had formed among the nobility and the nation at

[q] Knighton, ubi supra.

large. He therefore prosecuted his appeal, and submitted his cause to the ensuing parliament [r].

1382. Courteney succeeds to the primacy.

An event in the mean time had occurred which was of the utmost importance to the issue of this affair. Archbishop Sudbury, as we have seen, fell a victim to the late insurrection: and Courteney bishop of London was appointed to succeed him. He had ever been a most strenuous adversary to these ecclesiastical innovators. Sudbury, though a man of considerable ability, was of so mild and liberal a temper, as to have drawn upon him the imputation of secretly favouring the reformer. But Courteney was bold and enterprising, fond of authority, and disdainful of every obstacle which might restrain him in what he deemed the wholsome use of it. He deplored the long impunity of the men who were rapidly undermining the most ancient and venerable institutions and bringing religion itself into disgrace and contempt, and resolved that the first year of his primacy should be distinguished by the suppression of their daring assaults.

Council held at the Preaching Friars.

He is said to have been restrained for a short time from commencing his operations, by a scruple exactly conformable to that high sense of ecclesiastical authority which was the regulating principle of his conduct. He was elected archbishop in September 1381 [s], but it was not till the May of the present year that he received from Urban VI. the pall, the symbol of the pope's confirming him in his office [t]. Immediately after this, he summoned an extraordinary con-

[r] Lewis, Chap. VI.

[s] Godwin, archiepiscopi Cant. cap. LVIII.

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vocation of the church to meet in the convent of the Preaching Friars at London, to decide upon the fate of Wicliffe and his followers [t]. Here twenty-four propositions, imputed to Wicliffe, were submitted to the consideration of the assembly; and it was recommended to them to pronounce some of them heretical, and others erroneous.

Earthquake.

It happened, while these propositions were under examination, that the house in which the assembly sat was shaken by an earthquake, which was so violent that in Kent it is said to have thrown down churches [u]. Some of the more timid members, appalled at this phenomenon, insinuated in murmurs that it ought to be considered as a token that God was displeased with the business in which they were engaged. Courteney however rose in the midst of the commotion with a grave and animated countenance, and rebuked their scruples, observing that the earthquake ought rather to be interpreted as a divine signification of the downfal of heresy, and the purging the kingdom of pestilential errors [x]. Wicliffe, though thus formidably attacked, and though he was now nearly sixty years of age, showed that his spirit was not subdued, and amused himself with ridiculing the measures adopted by this body, which he called "the Counsayle of Freres in London with the Herydene," or hurricane [y].

Parliamentary bill against heresy.

Such measures having been adopted in this assembly as the judgment of the archbishop suggested, a bill was immediately after brought into parliament [z], doubtless at his

[t] Spelman, Concilia, ad ann. [u] Stow, ad ann. [x] Lewis, ubi supra.
[y] Knighton, ad ann. [z] Cotton, 5 R. 2.

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instigation, to empower the sheriffs in the different counties, at the requisition of the bishops, to apprehend the preachers of heresy, and their favourers and abettors, and to hold them in strong prison till they should be justified according to the law and reason of holy church. This bill did not pass the commons[a]. It is sufficiently remarkable however that, notwithstanding this defect, it was entered as law upon the records; and that, though the commons in the following parliament remonstrated against the fraud, declaring that it was never their intention to bind themselves to the prelates further than their ancestors had done[a], yet this bill, which never had any legal authority, remains to the present day on the statute-book[b].

rejected by the commons.

Courteney, having thus laid the foundation for compulsory measures, resolved not to leave these determinations in church and state a dead letter, as his predecessor had done. Oxford had long been considered as the focus of heresy. The chancellor indeed of the preceding year had taken some measures against Wicliffe; but he was now out of office, and his successor [Dr. Robert Rigge], as well as the majority of the members of the university, were favourable to the reformer. Courteney wrote to this officer, requiring him to silence one of the professors who was an adherent of Wicliffe[c]; but the chancellor, under pretence that the archbishop had no jurisdiction in the university, declined obeying the requisition. Courteney summoned Rigge to appear before him in London; and the chancellor found it

Courteney undertakes to purge the university.

opposed by the chancellor.

forces him to submit.

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[a] Cotton, 6 R. 2.

[b] Statutes at Large, 5 Ric. 2, Stat. 2, cap. 5.

[c] Wood, ad ann.

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1382. demands a recantation from the heretical professors.

necessary to comply. He however again rebelled, and again was brought up to the metropolis. The archbishop also summoned before him the principal Oxford teachers of the new doctrines, and proposed to them the alternative of recantation or imprisonment; to the former of which they are said to have submitted: not at first indeed; for it appears from the ecclesiastical records, that, of the three heretics, Hereford, Repyndon and Ashton, cited before archbishop Courteney at an adjourned sitting of the convocation at the Preaching Friars, on the twentieth of June, the two former returned modified answers concerning the doctrines in debate, which were declared to be unsatisfactory; and the last replied in a style of buffoonery, expressive of the contempt he entertained for the primate's authority and character [d]. Courteney further obtained from the king, who, immersed in the pleasures procured for him by his favourites, was willing by this sacrifice to procure the toleration of the church to his irregularities, letters patent addressed to the university, requiring them, within seven days from the receipt of this injunction, to banish Wicliffe and his adherents from Oxford, and to suppress all books and writings favourable to the new heresy [e]. Letters patent were also addressed to the bishops in their dioceses, authorising them forthwith to arrest all who should maintain privately or publicly the propositions condemned at the Preaching Friars, and to detain them in prison till they should have repented of their heresies [f]. Lastly, Courteney

Letters patent against heresy.

Wicliffe is expelled the university.

Convocation of St. Frideswide.

[d] Spelman, Concilia, ad ann.

[e] Rymer, 6 Ric. 2, Jul. 6.

[f] Lewis, ubi supra.

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held a convocation of his clergy toward the end of the year at the monastery of St. Frideswide near Oxford, where he again obtained an abjuration of their errors from those professors and others who had before complied with that requisition in London[f]. The result of all these proceedings of the zealous primate was, that the voice of heresy was no more publicly heard in the university.

Obscurity respecting the recantations.

It is not easy to determine who were and who were not the recanting parties on this occasion. By the monkish historians Wicliffe is represented as having been one. But this is by no means certain. Knighton, one of these historians, has inserted a paper, which he calls a recantation written by Wicliffe; but this paper, instead of being what it is styled, affirms in the most express terms the new doctrine in opposition to that of the real presence. It is not improbable that he was offered the alternative of retiring to his living of Lutterworth, where we know that he spent the rest of his days. He survived his expulsion from Oxford only two years. The majority of the teachers of the new doctrines appear to have recanted. The different fate of the two who after Wicliffe were the most considerable, Dr. Nicholas Hereford and Dr. Philip Repyndon, is sufficiently memorable. Hereford obstinately refused to retract his opinions, but at length consented to shut himself up in a convent of Carmelite Friars, where he died[g]. Repyndon made a full and ample recantation, and in process of time became a bishop, a cardinal, and a zealous persecutor of the Lollards[h].

Dr. Nicholas Hereford.

Dr. Philip Repyndon.

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[g] Wood, ad ann. [h] Godwin, Episcopi Lincoln. Lewis, Chap. X, Sect. xxi.

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1382. Imputed pusillanimity of the Lollards.

Hume reproaches these early English reformers, that they " seem not to have been actuated by the spirit of martyrdom [1]." It is curious to observe a man distinguished by his indifference to all religion, and of a temper clearly pacific and unenterprising, joining the vulgar cry on this occasion. What satisfaction ought it to afford to an historian or a reader of history, to find that the man who extorted our admiration during life, at last perished by an ignominious and tormenting death? But, putting this out of the question, let us enquire into the conduct which it becomes the reformer himself, actuated by a view to the benefit of mankind, to adopt in this alternative. We admire, and justly, the spirit of the persecuted individual who flinches not an atom before his tormentors, and refuses to qualify by a single syllable what he once maintained as important truth; but we may be permitted to question the wisdom and moral rectitude of his conduct. Death, inflicted by those who are accustomed to decree the execution of the most profligate and noxious members of the community, will always to the general eye appear ignominious. The man who is thus rudely thrust out from the roll of existence, will long be pursued with invective and evil tongues after he is no more. Why should he submit to this, if he can avoid it? It is well for the poor suffering individual if he can persuade himself that his death will be a source of glory and usefulness. But after all, the serenity with which he submits to tortures is no argument. This has as often been seen in the cause of error as of truth:

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[1] Chap. XVII.

1382.

and it is to be wished in every point of view that this mode of persuading bystanders to embrace or reject opinions could be totally proscribed. If he be, which the notion of martyrdom implies, a lover of virtue and of mankind, surely his life, though compelled to silence upon certain topics, will be more beneficial than his death. Plainly and directly speaking, it is only the destruction of persons uncommonly perverse and depraved from which we should expect advantage to mankind. Why should he put himself upon a level with these? I ought not to sign a paper containing sentiments opposite to my own, to obtain a sum of money or an office; but I would as willingly do this at the requisition of a chief justice as of a highwayman, if, while he grasps the paper in one hand, he presents a halter or a pistol with the other. The man who acts thus toward me I regard as a ruffian, and there is no impropriety in temporising to a certain degree with a person of that sort. Nothing ought to be refused by me when death is the alternative of refusal, except that which would so destroy my character and honour as to make the further prolongation of my life a burthen and a curse.

Commendation of Wicliffe.

This, which Hume and others have treated as a reproach to the reformers of the fourteenth century, is perhaps an additional proof of the genius of Wicliffe. No humane person can contemplate the fires which were afterward lighted in Smithfield but with inexpressible horror; and, if Wicliffe by his mode of proceeding postponed those accursed scenes for twenty years, he is in so doing entitled to the thanks of every friend of man. We do not find that the party of the Lollards perished through the sobriety of Wicliffe. We might have found, if Wicliffe had acted

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otherwise, the persecutions of the fourteenth century more barbarous and sanguinary than those which afterward took place in the sixteenth. Would it not have been possible, if the founders of the Protestant religion had acted with moderation, yielding in a certain degree to the storm but never sacrificing the smallest particle of inward principle and resolution, that the human mind might have broken its shackles in peace, and that the day of truth might have risen unpreceded by those fierce and dreadful tempests which actually ushered in the morn?

Right and wrong of his general system.

In religious innovation, as in almost all critical postures of human affairs, there is much of good and much of evil. The literature and the mind of Europe are and long will be deeply indebted to Wicliffe, and to John of Gaunt his patron. They were eminent instruments in removing that night and torpor in which we had so long been involved. But there is a stern and a rugged character in reformation, particularly religious reformation, which we must deplore, while we love the general result. History informs us, and we might easily have concluded that it was so, that Wicliffe and his confederates were copious in their abuse of all preachers who were not of their sect; styling them false brethren, imps of Satan, and warning their followers to give no ear to their doctrines. Sarcasm and invective, stirring up the angry passions of mankind, have almost always been the resources of innovators. We read of an instance in which two of the preachers, being at a loss for wood to boil their provisions, chanced upon a wooden image of St. Catharine; and, chopping it in pieces, jocosely remarked that Providence must have been concerned in

sending them so seasonable a supply [k]. They familiarly styled Our Lady of Walsingham (one of the shrines most in honour among the ancient English) the Witch of Walsingham [k]. There is an internal evidence in this phrase, which may well guarantee to us that it was not the invention of their calumniators. But the tendency of such licentious language must have been, to shock the pious and the worthy, and to overturn the principles of the weak and unstable. With the unenlightened and unthinking part of mankind, the whole circle of moral principles is bound together. They are fastened upon them by education, and confirmed by habit. Things sacred in themselves, are not sacred in their eyes from an intrinsic claim, but as connected with time and place, with outward ceremonies and solemn observances. It is only a virtue founded in principle, and nurtured in the genial soil of a well ordered mind, that will survive unhurt, when the prejudices upon which it used to lean for support are no more. We may therefore reasonably conclude that Wicliffe and his partisans did much of at least temporary mischief. They disturbed the visions and poetic forms of morality and religion. They offended the pious; they sapped the virtues of the unsteady; and they introduced a general spirit of grossness and illiberal sarcasm. We ought not to wonder that they had many enemies, nor to believe that all who persecuted them were actuated by a despotic temper or by sordid motives.

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Temper of John of Gaunt.

Knighton, to whose history we have had repeated oc-

[k] Knighton, ad ann.

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casion to refer, has introduced, influenced perhaps by the circumstance of the king of Castille withdrawing his patronage from Wicliffe[1], some circumstances favourable to the character of that prince, which, as having probably a connection with the sentiments of the reformer, cannot be more properly introduced than in this place. He calls John of Gaunt "the pious duke:" and then proceeds, "Let no man wonder that I mention him by this appellation. He is well entitled to it, since, in all his trials, the adversities he suffered, and the injuries which were maliciously heaped upon him, he sought no revenge, and gave no instructions for that purpose to persons who would readily have executed his commands, but cheerfully forgave every one who asked his forgiveness. In one instance, the apartment in which his plate was laid up was found to have suffered repeated depredations from certain of his servants or dependents, and, the malefactors being detected, the officers of his establishment to whom according to the customs of the times the local administration of justice belonged, proposed to execute summary justice upon them; but he forbade them to proceed, declaring that he would not consent that any man should be put to death for his goods, and ordering that the offenders should be dismissed, an oath being first exacted from them that they should wholly abstain from the family and palace of the king, from his own, and from those of his brothers." Be it observed, that this

[1] Knighton was also resident at Leicester, a favourite retreat of the king of Castille, and from that accident was likely to know more of his dispositions and habits than the herd of his contemporary bigots and slanderers.

is the man whom several of his contemporaries represented as possessed with an unbridled ambition, not hesitating to employ poison as the means for obtaining his ends, and indulging in the most brutal excesses; and that these calumnies have been delivered from hand to hand by all the historians who have treated of the times and transactions in which he was concerned[m]. CHAP. XLVI. 1382.

Anecdote.

I will add here an anecdote of John of Gaunt, more private and familiar in its nature than has ordinarily been preserved of persons living at so remote a period. "There is," says my author, "in the parish of Ratby in Leicestershire a meadow adjoining to the road from Market-Bosworth to Leicester. Before the fields were inclosed, this meadow belonged to several occupiers of land in the parish. The custom was, to mow their several allotments on a certain day, called 'the meadow-mowing.' When the labour of the day was over, the remaining part was spent in wrestlings, foot-balls, cudgel-playing, and other athletic exercises; and the evening with music and dancing on a small eminence in one part of the meadow. It happened, in the latter part of the reign of Edward III, or

[m] Even Lowth, who has taken so much pains to blacken the character of the king of Castille the better to justify the intemperance and indecorum of his own hero, confesses [Sect. V.] immediately on mentioning the accession of Richard II, that "he must now have relinquished his designs upon the crown, if he ever really entertained them." A strange time to have abjured so criminal a purpose: when his father and his elder brother, who were most capable of repressing his unlawful ambition, were dead; when the kingdom was exposed to all the evils of a long minority, and was in reality without an administration; and when it was first distracted by a most fearful anarchy, and afterward, through the prodigal and disgraceful measures pursued, totally weaned from all attachment to its sovereign.

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1382.

the beginning of that of Richard II, that John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster and earl of Leicester, passed by the meadow on his way to Leicester, where he then kept his court, on the day of the Meadow-Mowing, attended only by one servant. Observing mirth and festivity, he alighted from his horse, and asked the cause of their diversion. They answered, that they had been mowing the meadow according to ancient custom, which was called *Ramsdale*. Having joined them in their diversions, he was so well pleased with their innocent pastimes, that, when he took his leave, he told them, if they would meet him at Leicester, at such a time and place which he appointed, he would give to each of them an *ewe* to his *ram*, and a *wether*, whose *grassy* fleece should annually, when sold, produce them a plentiful repast. There was a consultation immediately held: some said it was only a joke; others that they were determined to know the truth of the matter. Accordingly, about fifteen persons set out for Leicester, and went to the appointed place, where they found the duke, who informed them that, if they would keep certain articles, he would give to each of them a piece or parcel of land, situated in a meadow in the parish of Enderby, adjoining to the river Soar, in the same county, containing by measure half an acre (seven or eight acres in all), for each man's private use, to be called the *ewes*; also another piece, about five yards wide and fifty or sixty yards long, for each, to be called the *boots* [profits, overplus]: and would likewise give to them a piece or parcel of land for their general use, containing about two acres, and washed on three sides by the river Soar (which in a rainy season is said to 'wash the wether's breech'), to be

called the *wether*; the grass crop to be sold annually at Enderby on Whit-Monday to the best bidder, the profits (which of late years have amounted to £. 4) to defray the expences of an annual feast on that day. The conditions of the feast are these: the company is to breakfast in Leicester, at any inn they shall think proper, upon a *calf's-head*, the bones of which are to be served up in a platter as one of their dishes at dinner: the proprietors are to bind their hats with a small silk lace, tagged at the ends with silver, and surmounted with a tuft of grass from the *wether*; they are to ride in procession to the high cross in Leicester, and thence to proceed to St. Mary's Church, which is to be decorated with flowers; a sermon is there to be preached for the benefit of a hospital founded by the good duke Henry, father of the princess Blanche; and, when the service is over, the clergyman shall recite the deed conveying this gift of land, the company shall return to their inn to dinner, and the day shall close with mirth and festivity [a]."

It is not easy to conceive a picture more interesting than this, to a mind not so much lost in false refinement as to despise the genuine and natural emotions of the human heart. It was gaiety and honest good-humour that first in this instance called forth the liberality of John of Gaunt. The titular king felt that he was a man, and the cheerly and pleasant sentiments of his nature boiled over at the view of human happiness. He felt a prouder, or a more inbred, tranquillity at the sight of living beings with whom he could fraternise, than at feeling himself lord

[a] Throsby, Supplementary Volume to Views in Leicestershire: art. Ratby.

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> Of shadowy forests, with gay champaigns rich'd,
> With plenteous rivers, and wide-skirted meads°.

It is pleasant to contemplate this ancient baron neighboured to a throne, in his accidental acts of beneficence as he rode forth from his venerable battlements, at one time adding to and entailing upon future times the festivity of a circle of honest rustics, and at another saving an ill-fated heretic from the flames lighted up for his destruction by the votaries of superstition.

It becomes, however, the sobriety of historical disquisition to distinguish here, and, while we are pleased with the human feelings of John of Gaunt, to acknowledge that he might have been more equitable and more virtuous. He was adding to the pleasurable feelings of the more robust and independent members of the community; but he was not acting the part of a man who bore in mind the shackled powers of intellect and usefulness he was enabled to enlarge, who benevolently recollected the scenes of private and unobtrusive woe it was in his power to relieve, who thought of the widow, the orphan and the prisoner, the sons of indulgence and ease whom ill fortune had cast forth to want, and the maimed and the cripple incapacitated to earn the means of subsistence. His jest of a *calf's-head*, a *wether*, and an *ewe*, was not in the most exquisite style of fancy; and there was more good-humour and convivial spirit, than principle and a digested and systematical philanthropy, in the act we have recited.

° Shakespear: Lear, Act I.

CHAP. XLVII.

POEMS TENDING TO PROMOTE THE CAUSE OF ECCLESIASTICAL REFORMATION.—VISIONS OF PIERCE PLOWMAN.

CHAP. XLVII.

Supposititious writings of Chaucer in favour of the doctrines of Wicliffe.

THE advocates of the doctrines of Wicliffe, and the Protestants of the sixteenth century, were anxious to press the venerable name of Chaucer into their cause. It appeared no very strained hypothesis to state the poet as a Lollard. He and Wicliffe were protected by the same patron; and he had in early life translated the *Roman de la Rose*, a poem satirising the pretensions of the mendicant orders in a style very similar to that of the patriarch reformer. But our ancestors, not satisfied with such tokens of apparent coincidence between these eminent geniuses, thought proper to give to the public as Chaucer's certain compositions in prose and verse written to promote the direct purposes of ecclesiastical reformation on the model of Wicliffe. This was easily done. Anonymous pieces of literature belonging to this remote period, particularly of the poetical class, readers were apt, even when they had no particular purpose to serve, to ascribe gratuitously to an author so celebrated, and so much in their recollection, as Chaucer. Of this sort are the majority of

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Jack Upland.

The Plowmans Tale.

The Pilgrimes Tale.

the pieces which Stow in his edition has added to the works of our author. It is in this way that a prose declamation against the abuses of the church, entitled Jack Upland [a], has been attributed to Chaucer. In the same manner an additional article became foisted into the Canterbury Tales, called the Plowmans Tale [b]. Even a further composition in a similar spirit was assigned to Chaucer, entitled the Pilgrimes Tale [c], which bears internal marks of having been written later than the year 1536[d]. It is not probable that any one of these pieces was really composed by him. Both in language and sentiments they appear to belong to a later period. Chaucer, though an enemy to the artifices and insincerity of the friars, and perhaps personally the friend of Wicliffe, does not seem ever to have enlisted himself in the party of the Lollards. In the Testament of Love, he expresses his belief in the real presence; and, in the discourse of the Person [Parson], with which the Canterbury Tales are concluded, he declaims with great emphasis for the utility of auricular confession.

Visions of Pierce Plowman.

became the origin of other poems against the established church, under the name of the Plowman.

The mention of the Plowmans Tale naturally leads to the consideration of a work of no small merit, certainly the production of the age of Chaucer, entitled the Visions of Pierce Plowman. It is probable that the Tale just mentioned, and another ancient poem, entitled Pierce the

[a] First printed by Speght in the edition of 1602. See Tyrwhit, Introd. to Glossary.

[b] First printed in the edition of 1542.

[c] Speght, Additions to the Life of Chaucer: his books.

[d] Tyrwhit, Preface, note e.

Plowmans Crede, derived their name from the popularity which attended upon these ancient allegories. Another honour of the highest class which the Visions of Pierce Plowman may boast, is the manner in which they are mentioned by Spenser in his Epilogue to the Shepherd's Calendar, where, addressing his book, he says, CHAP. XLVII. are applauded by Spenser.

Dare not to match thy pipe with Tityrus his stile,
Nor with the Pilgrim that the Ploughman plaid awhile;

Tityrus being certainly an appellation bestowed by Spenser upon Chaucer[e], and afterward from him adopted by Milton[f]. There is an obvious propriety in this appellation, as having been chosen by Virgil, who appears, from the First Book of the House of Fame, to have been Chaucer's favourite classic. Mr. Tyrwhit indeed has thrown out an insinuation that, in the second line of the above couplet, Spenser does not refer to the Visions of Pierce Plowman, but to the Plowmans Tale falsely attributed to Chaucer; and gives this ingenious reason for his opinion, "that the author of the Visions in no instance speaks of himself as a Ploughman," and that, if Spenser was guilty of a flagrant injustice and absurdity in "putting the author of the Plowman's Tale on the same footing with Chaucer, this may be supposed to have been done in compliance with the taste of his age[g]." But the whole of this remark is in the spirit of Mr. Tyrwhit, whose delight it is to strip

[e] Shepherd's Calendar, February, June, December; and Colin Clout is Come Home Again, init.

[f] Mansus, ver. 34.

[g] Introd. to Cant. Tales, note 32.

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ancient anecdote and record of every thing which can render them interesting to the imagination. Spenser, who was no antiquarian, needs not be imagined more accurate than Warton, who was an antiquarian, and who naturally construes the line above quoted as referring to the more eminent poet[h]. Not to mention that, if we regard the word "Ploughman" in the quotation as the name of a poem, and interpret "plaid" in the sense of "piped" or "sung," there will be no inaccuracy imputable to the passage. The writer of the Visions is a "Pilgrim;" for it is among his wanderings in the Malvern Hills in Worcestershire, that, overcome with fatigue, he falls asleep, and sees the scenes and personages he has described to his reader. If Spenser had "complied with the taste of his age," he would have spoken of the author of the Plowmans Tale not as the competitor of Chaucer, but as being Chaucer himself. But, in reality, the suffrage of a poet to the merits of a brother poet is one of those things which in literature should be regarded as most sacred, and which has perhaps scarcely been profaned but in the case of friendship or clientship to a living bard.

Period at which they were written.

The date of the Visions of Pierce Plowman seems capable of being satisfactorily ascertained. The author speaks of the siege of Calais as a recent event[i], and represents Mede [or Venality], one of his allegorical personages, as declaring that, if her advice had been listened to, the conquest of France would have been completed[i]. Conscience in return reproaches Mede with having caused the

[h] Observations on Spenser, Sect. IV.

[i] Passus III.

death of the king's father[k], a remark obviously applicable to the catastrophe of Edward II. In another part of the poem, Reason is introduced taking her seat between the king and his son[l]: the Black Prince therefore was now popular. The siege of Calais belongs to the year 1347; the battle of Poitiers happened in 1356: the siege of Calais would not have been mentioned as the last memorable public event, if the battle of Poitiers had already occurred. The above declaration of Mede also implies that the prosecution of the war was now suspended; and it was suspended for eight years by a truce, previously to the battle of Poitiers. It is therefore reasonable to believe that the poem of Pierce Plowman was produced in this interval. We may further with sufficient probability regard the following lines as tending to fix the period in which the work was written.

> In date of our [m]dryght, in a drye Apriell,
> A thousande and thre hundred, twyse twenty and ten,
> My wafers [n]ther wer [o]geisen, whan Chicester was mair[p].

An allusion which occurs to "the pestilence-time[q]" as recent [the great plague of London occurred in 1349] may also serve to confirm this interpretation.

Name and profession of their author.

The author of the Visions of Pierce Plowman is said to

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[k] Passus III. [l] Passus IV. [m] lord. SAX. [n] *fortè*, thei.

[o] scarce, uncommon. *Geason*, Spenser. In other words, it was a year of dearth.

[p] Passus XIII. According to Stow (Survey of London: temporal government), John of Chichester was mayor of London in 1359 and 1369. Stow, in his Annals, who, as well as Wood, calls the author of the poem John Malverne, ascribes the Visions of Pierce Plowman to the year 1342.

[q] Passus X.

CHAP. XLVII. have been Robert Langland [r], a priest [s] (Wood says a monk [t]), born at Mortimer's [s] Cleobury in the county of Salop [r], and fellow of Oriel College in Oxford [u]. It has since been observed that the only indication of the author's name occurring in the poem is that he is repeatedly spoken of by the prænomen of William. This remark however ought not to be considered as sufficient to overthrow the evidence of Crowley, the ancient editor: nothing is more common than a confusion of Christian names in speaking of remote and undistinguished persons; and Crowley perhaps, recollecting imperfectly the information he had received, felt an unconscious preference to the Christian name he himself bore [w]. Let us not, without adequate reason, deprive ourselves of the pleasure of believing that we possess some individual knowledge, respecting the persons who awaken our partiality and are entitled to our gratitude [x].

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[r] Preface to Robert Crowley's edition, 1550. [s] Bale, Cent. VI, Chap. xxxvii.

[t] Wood, Antiq. Oxon. Lib. II, Collegium Orielense: scriptores.

[u] Wood, ubi supra. Stow, A. D. 1342.

[w] In the printed editions there is a hemistich, " Sonne, slepest thou ?" which, in the Harleian (No. 2376) and Cotton (Vespasian, B. 16) manuscripts, stands " Will [or Wiliam], slepest thou ?" If this is an intentional variation in the editions, and not arising from a difference of copies, the change of the Christian name cannot be accounted for from the motive assigned in the text.

[x] Crowley does not express himself like a person speaking at hazard respecting the author of the poem. " Being desyerous," says he, " to knowe the name of the autoure of this most worthy worke (gentle reader) and the tyme of the writynge of the same: I did not onely gather together suche aunciente coppies as I could come by, but also consult such men as I knew to be more exercised in the studie of antiquities, then I myselfe have ben. And by some of them I have learned that the autour was named Roberte langelande, a Shropshere man, borne in Cleybirie, about viii miles from Malverne hilles."

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Plan of the work.

The Visions of Pierce Plowman are divided in the printed editions into twenty Passus or Cantos; in two old and perfect manuscripts[y] in the British Museum, the divisions amount to twenty-three. In number of verses however, calculating from the pages and the number of lines in a page, the printed copies do not greatly differ from the manuscript. The plan of the poem is extremely miscellaneous; several of the cantos having very little connection with each other. The object may be defined to be a satire upon the vices of almost every profession, but particularly upon the corruptions of the clergy, and the absurdities of superstition[z]. The personages of the poem are Mede, Conscience, Simony, Theology, Covetise, Hunger, Sloth, Wit, Study, &c. Separately from the question of poetical merit exhibited in the work, it will be seen from the plan, that it possesses a high value, as comprising a picture of the manners of the fourteenth century through almost every class into which society was divided.

After a variety of unconnected scenes, the author at length meets with Thought, by whom he is introduced to Wit; and this latter directs him to the habitation of Do-well, Do-better and Do-best, three persons concerning whom he was making very anxious enquiry. Their dwelling, when explained, appears to be in a castle, made by Kind [or Nature], and composed of the four elements. This castle is the human body. Kind has closed craftily within it a

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[y] Ms. Cotton. Vespasian. B. 16. The divisions are the same in Ms. Harleian. No. 2376.

[z] Warton, Vol. I, Sect. viii.

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paramour whom he loves, called *Anima.* Sir Do-well is the guardian of the castle; and Do-better, his daughter, the lady's principal attendant: Do-best is over both, and whatever he bids must be done. The constable of the castle and keeper of the watch, is sir Inwit, assisted by five fair sons, sir See-well, and Say well, and Hear-well, with sir Work-well, a [a] wighty man of strength, and sir Godfrey Go-well. In this place, the poem is divided in the Cotton and Harleian manuscripts, with the notice, *Explicit Visio Willī de Petro Ploubman*, and, immediately after, *Hic incipit Visio ejusdem Willī de Dowel* [Do-well]. The poem is divided in these copies into the vision of Piers Plouhman in ten Passus, the Vision of Dowel in seven Passus, of Dobet in four Passus, and of Dobest in two Passus, making in all twenty-three. Toward the end of the performance, Antichrist is introduced, whose banner is borne by Pride, and who is welcomed into a monastery with the ringing of bells, and a solemn congratulatory procession of all the monks marching out to receive him. This personage at length lays siege to the strong-hold of Conscience, assisted by seven giants, who are the Seven Deadly Sins; and the assault is led by Sloth, who has under him a battalion of more than a thousand priests.

Specimens. Covetousness described.

The delineation of the person of Covetise may serve as a specimen of the author's talent for descriptive poetry.

> And then came Covetis, can I him not discrive,
> So hungerly and hollowe, so sternely he lok'd:

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[a] active.

He was [b] bittle-brow'd and [c] baberlypp'd also,
With two blered eyén, as a blinde hagge;
And as a lethren purse lolled his chekes,
[d] Well syder than his chyn, they shever'd for colde;
And, as [e] a bound man of his bacon, his berd was [f] bidrauled:
With a [g] hode on his heade, and a lousy hatte above;
And in a tawny [h] teberd, of twelve winter age,
Al to torné, and [i] baudye, and full of lyce crepinge,—
[k] But if that a louse could have lepen the better,
She had not walkt on the [l] welte, so was it thred bare.
Passus V.

Speech of Envy.

The speech of Envy, who comes to be shrived by a confessor, is scarcely inferior in spirit and discrimination to any specimen of poetry in the English language.

I wold be shriv'n, quod this shrew, if I for shame durst.—
I have a neyghbour nye me, I have [m] noyed hym ofte,
And made his frend his foe [n] through my false tong;
His grace and his good happes grev'th me full sore.
Betwene many and many I make debate oft,
That both lyfe and [o] lyme is lost [n] through my spech.
And, when I mete him in market that I most hate,
I [p] halsé him hendlech as I his frend were;

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[b] beetle-browed, having projecting brows. [c] drivel-lipped, from *baver*, Fr.
[d] Hanging lower. Percy, Vol. II, Glossary.
[e] a serving-man, a predial slave, eating fat bacon. [f] bedriveled.
[g] hood. [h] cloak. [i] dirty. Tyrwhit.
[k] *But* seems here used in the sense of *Add*, *And*. See Diversions of Purley.
[l] selvage. [m] annoyed.
[n] thoru, Mss. This word in Pierce Plowman is perhaps always a dissyllable.
[o] limb. [p] embrace him courteously.

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For he is doughtier then I, I dare do none other,—
And had I mastry and might, God wot my wyll!
And, whan I come to the [q] kirke, and shuld knele to the [r] rode,
And pray for the people, as the priest teacheth,
For pilgrimes, and for palmers, and for al the people after,
Than I cry on my knees, Thou, Christ, geve him sorow,
That bare away my [s] bole, and my [t] broké shete!
Away from the aulter then turne I mine eyen,
And beholdé how Elen hath a new coate;
I wysh that 'twere mine, with al the webbe after.
And at mens [u] lesing I laughé, [x] that mine herte aketh;
And for their winning I wepe and [y] welé the tyme:
For whoso hath more than I, that angreth me sore.
And thus I lyve [z] loveles, like a [a] lyther dogge,
That al my body [b] bolneth for bytter of my gall:
I [c] might not eaten many yeres as a man ought:
[d] May no suger ne no sweté thing swagé the swelling,
Ne no [e] diapenidion drive it from my herte,
Nether shrift, nether shame, but [f] shraping of mi maw.

Passus V.

Langland imitated by Chaucer.

There is much humour in the passage in which Mede is described performing her shrift; and Chaucer has been supposed to have had this passage in his eye in his Sompnoures Tale [g], though he has heightened the satire with many additional circumstances of comic and picturesque imagination.

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[q] church. [r] rood, cross, crucifix. [s] bowl. [t] torn sheet.
[u] losing. [x] till. [y] wail. [z] unloving. [a] vicious, curst.
[b] swells. [c] have not. [d] No sugar, nor &c, can. [e] cathartic.
[f] this word seems to mean *cramming*. It is not to be found in the glossaries.
[g] Warton, Vol. I, Sect. VIII.

Than came ther a confessor, cop'd as a frier;
To Medé the mayd he [b] mellud thes wordes,
And sayd full softly, in [i] shrift as it were:
Though [k] lewd men and lern'd men had lien by [l] the bothe,
And Falsenes had yfoul'd the this fifty wynter,
I shall [m] assoyle the my selfe for a [n] seme of whete,
And [o] als be thy [p] bedman, and beare wel thy message
Amongest knightés and clerkés conscience to turne.
Then Mede for her misdeeds to that manné kneled,
And shrove her of her [q] shroudnes, shameles I trow,
Told him a tale, and toke him a [r] noble
For to be her bedman, and her [s] broker also.
Than he [m] assoyl'd her [t] sone, and [u] sithen he sayde:
We have a window in working, wil [x] set us ful high;
Woldest thou glase the gable, and grave therin thi name,
[y] Seker shoulde thy soule be heaven to have.
[z] Wyst I that, quod the woman, I would not spare
For to be your frende, fryer, and faylé you never;
I shal cover your kyrke, your cloisture [a] do maken,
Wallés do whyten, and wyndowes do glasen,
Do paynten and portraye, and pay for the makyng,
That every [b] segge shal say, I am sister of your house.

Passus III.

The following passage has deservedly been pointed out by preceding commentators, not only as possessing un- *by Milton.*

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[h] *forté* honied, uttered in a wheedling, affected voice. [i] i. e. secretly.
[k] ignorant, unlearned. [l] thee. [m] absolve.
[n] seam, a measure containing eight bushels. [o] also.
[p] beadsman, a man employed in praying for another. [q] shrewdness.
[r] six shillings and eight pence. [s] bawd. [t] soon. [u] afterward.
[x] make us famous. [y] Secure, certain. [z] Knew.
[a] cause to be made. [b] bench, *siége*, Fr.

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common energy and sublimity, but as having probably furnished Milton with the first hint of his description of a lazar-house.

[c] Kynd Conscience tho heard, and came out of the planetts,
And sent forth his [d] forriours. Fevers and fluxes,
Coghés and [e] cardiacles, crampés and toth aches,
Reumes and [f] radgondes and [g] raÿnous scalles,
Bylés and botches and burnynge agues,
Freneses and foule evill, foragers of Kinde,
Hadden [h] pricked and praiéd polles of the people,
That largely a legion losten their lives sone.
There was "[i] Harow! and helpe! here commeth Kinde,
With Death that is dreadeful, to undone us all!"
The lord that lyv'th [k] after lust tho aloude cried
After Confort, a knight, to come and bear his banner.
Alarme! alarme! quod that lord, [l] ech lyfe kepe his own!
And than met these men: theyr minstrels [m] myght pype,
And theyr heraudes of armes [n] had descrived lordes.
Agé the [o] hoore he was in the [p] vaw-ward
And bare the banner before Death; by right he it claim'd:
Kyndé came after, with many kene sores,
As pockés and pestilences, and much people [q] shent.

---

[c] i. e. Nature then heard the prayer of Conscience. The planets were conceived to be the sources of disease.

[d] *forrayers*, foragers.

[e] heart-aches.

[f] *Rhadegiæ*, piles. See the old English books of medicine.

[g] *roynysche*, Cotton Ms, from *raigneux*, *rogneux*, Fr. eating, gnawing: *scalles*, leprosy.

[h] selected, marked out for destruction, as *to prick for sheriffs*: *praied*, preyed upon: *polles*, catalogues, a muster-roll.

[i] Haro, Fr. help!

[k] luxuriously.

[l] each keep (preserve) his own life!

[m] did.

[n] descried the leaders of the enemy's force.

[o] hoary.

[p] van.

[q] ruined, hurt.

So Kind through corruptions killed ful many:
Death came drivynge after, and all to dust [r] pashed
Kyngés and [s] Kaysers, knightés and popes.

Passus XX.

The passage alluded to in Milton is this:

Immediately a place
Before his eyes appear'd, sad, noisom, dark:
A lazar-house it seem'd, wherein were laid
Numbers of all diseas'd; all maladies
Of gastly spasm, or racking torture; qualms
Of heart-sick agony; all feaverous kinds;
Convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarrhs;
Intestine stone and ulcer; cholic pangs;
Demoniac phrenzy, moping melancholy;
And moon-struck madness; pining atrophy,
Marasmus, and wide-wasting pestilence;
Dropsies, and asthmas, and joint-racking rheums.
Dire was the tossing! deep the groans! Despair
Tended the sick busiest from couch to couch:
And over them triumphant Death his dart
Shook; but delay'd to strike.

PARADISE LOST, BOOK XI, ver. 477.

Versification of the poem.

The versification of the Visions of Pierce Plowman is considerably different from any which has been used for some centuries in the English language. It has been decided by the critics, that "the verses of this author are

[r] dashed, with the paw, or hoof.

[s] Cæsars. In the Harleian Ms. this line stands

King|és and knightes,| kaysayser|es and popes;

nearer to the anapestic measure than the verse in the text.

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Its alliteration.

not distinguished from prose, either by a determinate number of syllables, or by rhyme, or indeed by any other apparent test, except the studied recurrence of the same letter three times in each line; a contrivance which we should not suspect of producing much harmony, but to which (as Crowley, the original editor of the poem, justly observes) even a modern ear will gradually become accustomed [t]."

This appears to me a mistake of exactly the same nature as Dryden has committed, when, speaking of Chaucer's versification, he has ridiculed the opinion of "him who published the last edition [u]," that, 'altho in divers places Chaucer's verses may seem to us to stand of unequal measures, yet a skilful reader, that can scan them in their nature, shall find it otherwise.' Dryden represents this as a decision "not worth confuting; an error of so gross and obvious a nature, as, in every thing but matters of faith and revelation, common sense will teach us to reject [x]." The judgment of that editor is however now established beyond confutation; nor would it perhaps be less easy to vindicate the versification of Langland, than Mr. Tyrwhit and others have found it to establish the harmony of Chaucer's poems.

Its anapestic measure.

It has very truly been said that the scheme of versification in Pierce Plowman, when regular and complete, is required to contain three words beginning with the same letter: it might, I believe, have been added that two of these words are in that case always to be found in the first hemistich, and

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[t] Ellis, Specimen of the Early English Poets, Vol. I, Chap. VI. See also Tyrwhit, Essay, note 57; and Percy, Reliques, Vol. II, Book III, Introduction.

[u] Edition, 1687, Preface.

[x] Preface to Fables.

one in the last. It would have been surprising however, as the critics have justly remarked, if verses, having no other principle of structure than this alliteration, should "produce much harmony." But it will probably be found on examination, that the verses of Langland are properly anapestic, or consisting of four feet of three syllables each, the last syllable of each foot receiving the emphasis; with scarcely more deviation from the regularity of this scheme than is to be found in the most approved modern writers by whom it is employed. Sometimes a foot, particularly the first, consists of one short syllable and one long, and is an iambic; sometimes it consists of three short syllables and one long; and sometimes, the beat, or emphasis, falling upon the first syllable of the verse, this single syllable represents a foot: but to irregularities of this nature English poetry, in almost every age, has been accustomed. There are also verses which it seems impossible to reduce to any scheme of harmony; but that by no means proves any thing against the rythmical measure and scansion of the rest. The difficulty of forming our pronunciation so as constantly to produce the intended harmony, will not be greater in Langland than in Chaucer; and the recollection of their respective laws of versification will often assist us, in the one and the other, to correct the perversions of transcribers. It has truly been observed[y], in opposition to Warton, that the alliteration of Langland is no more a restraint upon the poet's fancy than rhyme; or indeed than perhaps any other well concocted scheme of versification: and it will probably be seen in the last result, that the verses of Pierce

[y] Ellis, ubi supra.

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Plowman's Visions are little less skilfully modelled to a certain law of harmony than the verses of the Canterbury Tales.

Its popularity with the Lollards and Protestants.

Langland, if the chronology we have assigned to his writings be just, may be regarded as the precursor of Wicliffe. His censures of the abuses of the Romish hierarchy exceed in boldness those of all preceding declaimers. He has even delivered what may be called prophecies of the history of the reformation, which have excited the greatest astonishment in the minds of modern readers. He was however on the whole probably a sound Catholic, and would have felt great indignation and horror at the peremptory proceedings of Wicliffe and his followers. Meanwhile the fate of his poetry became united with the fate of the Lollards. With them his work was a favourite companion and relaxation. His genius was their boast; his satire their consolation: they felt secure that they could not be worthy objects of contempt, while sallies so pregnant with imagination, with energy, with all that the English language could boast of most excellent, were in agreement with them. On the other hand, the Catholics regarded Langland with horror; if the author had lived to a later period, they would probably, in spite of the eminence of his attainments, have, without compunction, consigned him to the flames. The Lutherans and Calvinists of a later age revived the expiring reputation of Pierce Plowman, and perused his lucubrations with transport; they were proud to find sentiments with which they were reproached as modern, clothed in so ancient, so venerable, and so splendid a form. The lovers of poetry, and the martyrs of patriotism and religion, were alike loud in their applauses of the Plowman; and the taste of

the age taught men that they could not offer a more honourable oblation to the merits of Chaucer, than by representing him, with or without the strictness of evidence, as the fellow-labourer of Langland.

Comparison of Langland and Chaucer.

It has been already shown that the Visions of Pierce Plowman were written during the eight years truce from 1347 to 1355. Chaucer was already a poet. He had written his Court of Love, and was probably at this time employed in writing his Troilus and Creseide. Langland therefore stands on much higher ground in point of antiquity than Gower, who is not known to have written English verse earlier than the sixteenth year of Richard II.

Their primary equality.

At the period when Langland's poem was yet new to the ears of his countrymen, he might place himself proudly upon an equality with his more famous and fortunate contemporary. His versification, when best illustrated and understood, will probably be found not altogether so sweet and mellifluous as that of Chaucer; though perhaps no reason can be assigned, independently of the habit to which our ears are formed, why the alliterative initials employed by Langland should not be as respectable a concomitant of poetical conceptions, as that chiming of similar terminations which is known among us by the name of rhyme. Chaucer's thoughts are more refined than those of Langland; he was a closer observer of human nature, especially in what relates to the softer passions, and the more subtle and evanescent workings of the soul. But Chaucer, particularly in the Troilus and Creseide, which, in point of chronology, is the piece which stands in competition with the Visions, is a translator only; nor perhaps can any passages be produced from the works of our favoured bard, of more energy

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Langland and Chaucer not acquainted with each other.

It is probable that Chaucer and Langland were unacquainted with each other. Much is it to be regretted that, in an age when poetry was young, two men so uncommonly gifted should not have been brought into contact. They would have been friends in as eminent a degree, as Chaucer and Gower were. Langland, it may be, perished unknown and uncountenanced, discouraged and depressed by the neglect he was fated to endure. Chaucer would have brought him from his retreat, have introduced him to the palaces of the great, and have plentifully supplied him with the means of improvement, and with the honourable support and honest pleasure which result to a man of ardent and aspiring spirit when the faces of his fellow beings are turned upon him with a confession of his worth. But England was not permitted to be blest with the effusions of Langland's riper and more cultivated mind.

Versification of the Plowmans Crede.

of the Plowmans Tale.

The versification of Pierce the Plowmans Crede is nearly the same with that of the poem of Langland, but more uncultivated and wild in its structure. The Plowmans Tale, which has been so absurdly ascribed to Chaucer, is very different in the mechanism of its verse, though it affects to maintain a certain degree of resemblance by means of alliterative initials. It is written in stanzas of eight lines each, ending in a sort of burthen; and the verse is octosyllabic, in the same manner as the Romaunt of the Rose, and the Book of the Duchess, except that the rhymes are alternate.—It may be observed that even Spenser, where he means, in the passage formerly quoted, to commemorate the poem of Langland, has thought proper to introduce the triple alliteration in compliment to the ancient writer, though the verse in which it is placed is not anapestic, but iambic.

Not written by the same author.

Warton is inclined to believe that Pierce the Plowmans Crede and the Plowmans Tale were written by the same person [a]. Speght is of opinion that the writer of the Plowmans Tale is also the author of Jack Upland [a], which he considers as being of the nature of a creed. Both these judgments are founded upon this couplet in the Plowmans Tale.

> And of frerés I have before
> Told in a makin of a crede.
>
> ver. 3005, Urry's Edition.

The inference which they draw is however by no means a close one. The couplet indeed probably refers to Pierce the Plowmans Crede: but all that it implies is, that, as the appellation of the Plowman descended from generation to generation among the poets who satirised the corruptions of the Roman Catholic church, so the Plowman whose declamation pretended to be a sequel to the Canterbury Tales, might, poetically speaking, be considered as one with the Plowman who in his Crede inveighs against the friars, though the writers of the two performances might, in strict chronology, have existed at an interval of centuries.

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[a] Vol. I, Sect. IX.

[a] Proem to Jack Upland in Speght's edition.

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COMMOTIONS IN FRANCE.—SCHISM OF THE CHURCH.—PROPOSED EXPEDITION INTO SPAIN.—CRUSADE OF SPENCER, BISHOP OF NORWICH.—TRUCE.

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1381. Minority of Charles VI.

THE commencement of the reign of Charles VI. king of France was attended with many unprosperous circumstances. The government fell into the hands of his uncles; and these princes, guided by sentiments less honourable and pure than those of John of Gaunt, used the power devolved upon them, only for their private purposes. Charles V. had imposed heavy taxes upon the people; but he was a severe economist, and left behind him considerable treasures. His brothers, not contented with dissipating these treasures, revived, and even increased, after a short interval of specious remission, the burthens of the late reign. The common people had submitted to the hardships inflicted upon them by a sober and economical monarch, but felt much less patient under the oppressions of a selfish and prodigal regency. They broke out into excesses similar to those in England, which have already been described, but of longer duration. They murdered the collectors of the imposts, and broke open

Insurrections among his subjects.

1381.

the prisons. These circumstances occurred at Paris; at Rouen they elected a person whom they styled their king, the first act of whose reign was the publication of an edict for the perpetual abolition of taxes[a]. The insurgents of this period are distinguished in the French historians by the appellation of *maillotins*, taken, as it is said, from the mallet, or hammer of iron or steel, which they used to break the armour of their adversaries. It may also be suspected that a sort of pun was intended in this appellation, which, interpreted according to the rules of grammatical analogy, would more naturally signify *babes in their swaddling clothes*.

1382. Warlike projects of the English government.

This situation of affairs in the rival kingdom inspired the statesmen of England with the thought of taking advantage of the anarchy of France, for the purpose of obliging the government of that country to conclude a peace on terms less severe than they had lately demanded. Richard II, who was totally destitute of the patience, vigour and self-denial requisite for military glory, but who from a distance regarded it with eagerness, was not displeased at the suggestion. In May he announced to his parliament the plan of a voyage-royal to France[b]. In December there is a writ in Rymer[c], directed to the king's admiral, requiring him to arrest all ships of a certain burthen, to be aiding and useful in the king's proposed passage.

Schism of the church.

A further circumstance came in aid of the military projects of the present period. There were at this time, as

[a] Froissart, Chap. lxxxiv, lxxxviii, xcv. Villaret, Histoire de France, ad ann.
[b] Cotton, 5 Ric. 2. [c] 6 Ric. 2, Dec. 12.

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we have seen, two pretenders to the papal throne: Urban VI, an Italian, residing at Rome; and Robert, calling himself Clement VII, a Frenchman, residing at Avignon. To the former of these adhered England, Italy and the Empire; and to the latter France, with its allies, Scotland, Castille and Flanders. Urban, first elected, and in tranquil possession of the ancient seat of ecclesiastical empire, was impatient of the insolence of his rival, and issued letters of a crusade exciting his adherents to the subjecting by force of arms such states as professed themselves obstinately rebellious to the legitimate possessor of the papal authority. Letters of this sort were directed in England, to John of Gaunt who claimed the throne of Castille, and to Spencer bishop of Norwich who had displayed great vigour in suppressing the late insurrection, and whom pope Urban endeavoured to instigate to an invasion of the territories of the count of Flanders [d].

Pope Urban issues letters of crusade.

John of Gaunt proposes an expedition into Spain.

John of Gaunt submitted to the English parliament in November 1381 a proposal for transporting two thousand men at arms and two thousand archers upon an expedition into Spain; provided the parliament would enable him to raise a loan of £. 60,000 [in modern money upward of one million sterling], which he proposed to engage himself, by sufficient sureties, faithfully to repay [e]. His brother, the earl of Cambridge, had sailed for Spain in the beginning of that year. This proposal was by the king's direction again laid before parliament in the autumn of the present year, together with an offer by the bishop of

Proposal of bishop Spencer.

[d] Cotton, 6 Ric. 2.

[e] Ditto, 5 Ric. 2.

Norwich for a similar crusade in Flanders [r]. The proposal of John of Gaunt was declined by parliament; and that of the military prelate, though not till the spring of 1383, received the sanction of this assembly.

Policy of the war.

The war between England and France had now been for two years in a state of tacit suspension; and it might well be doubted, by a sober calculator of moral and political evils, how far it was advisable to rouse it from its repose. The temptations however, to a common eye, of the anarchy prevailing in the latter country, and of the religious motives growing out of the schism which might be employed to awaken men to arms, were too great to be resisted. If the present opportunity were not embraced, France would prepare herself for aggression at a time when we should no longer have these advantages within our reach. It is thus that the voluntary introduction of that mass of calamity and vice expressed by the term war, has ever been a subject of fantastic computations to the cold-blooded and specious mortals known by the name of statesmen.

State of Spain.

Motives for invasion.

In either of the quarters pointed out for crusade, France appeared to be particularly exposed to injury. Henry of Transtamare, especially from the period at which John of Gaunt had avowed pretensions to the Castillian throne, had ever been one of her most zealous and active allies. On the other hand, the proud Castillians had never been entirely reconciled to the succession of a bastard race, and the English prince was not without his partisans. If Spain

[r] Cotton, 6 Ric. 2.

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could, by a change of her sovereign, be converted from an ally of France to an ally of England, this would, according to the reasonings of politicians, give an entirely new face to the questions at issue between the rival powers; though perhaps even this advantage would be rendered useless under such a government as that of Richard II. seemed likely to be.

Sentiments of John of Gaunt.

John of Gaunt no doubt believed that it would be highly honourable to his country, if a branch of the house of Plantagenet could be seated upon the throne of Castille. But, if he thought of his country, it may be believed that he did not entirely forget himself. To reign among a people distinguished by the name of the Old Christians, and whose annals had been adorned, more than those of any other European monarchy, with feats of chivalry and heroism, was a favourite object of his wishes. During the latter years indeed of his father's reign, when the whole power of the English government had been confided to him, the desires he felt respecting Spain were sober and moderate. But, from the period of the accession of his nephew, his situation had been essentially changed, and was continually growing worse. He was almost too great for a subject, particularly in a country so unsettled as England, and where the persons holding the powers of administration entertained a rooted antipathy against him. In regard to personal safety, his residence here was scarcely eligible. And, if we consider his feelings, we shall not wonder that, foreseeing the calamities which impended over his nephew; and conscious of his impotence, harassed as he was by slander, and pursued by unpopularity, to

prevent them; he desired to banish himself from his native home, and not to remain an unprofitable spectator of the miseries of England.

State of Flanders.

Such were the motives, public and private, of the proposed expedition into Spain. The case of Flanders was equally singular, and an enterprise on that side was thought to promise greater advantage. Flanders was one of the first countries in Europe which had experienced the political effects of mercantile opulence. In 1337 the people of that country had risen against their feudal sovereign, and had been among the first to encourage Edward III. in his enterprise upon the crown of France. Their rebellion was of a very different complexion from those which have been above described. Its first instigator, James d'Arteville, an opulent trader of the town of Ghent, and a man of extraordinary talents, had immediately taken the lead; and, without the advantages of birth, or the forms of election, had made himself the sovereign of his country. The count of Flanders was obliged to resort for safety to the court of France. The revenues of the principality were received by D'Arteville, and expended according to his discretion. Such adherents of the exiled count as were likely to disturb the tranquillity of the new establishment, were sent into banishment by the demagogue, half their income being sequestered for the use of the state, and the other half appropriated to the subsistence of their families. He is said, whenever he appeared in public, to have been accompanied by seventy or eighty attendants instructed in his pleasure, who were accustomed, at a certain sign from their master, instantly to dispatch any one whom he

James d'Arteville.

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pointed out to their vengeance, though D'Arteville at the same moment perhaps would exhibit the appearance of commanding them to desist, and reproving their violence. Under his government Flanders prospered; and though, after a reign of eight years, he lost his life in a popular commotion, his memory was still cherished by his countrymen. During the whole of this period, he was the faithful ally of Edward III; and at his death the cities of Flanders were obliged to send a deputation to the English sovereign, to justify themselves from the imputation of being concerned in his murder [g].

Philip d'Arteville.

After the death of this extraordinary rebel, the count of Flanders was restored to his dignity; but, not profiting by the experience of the past, and oppressing the people by vexatious imposts, they once more rose in rebellion against him in the year 1379. After various hostilities carried on with a doubtful success, the Flemings were at length induced to recollect the prosperity which they had enjoyed under their plebeian sovereign, and cast their eyes upon Philip d'Arteville, his son [h]. The young burgher remembered the tragical fate of his father, and expressed some repugnance to the situation they tendered him. It is said ultimately to have been forced upon him; yet, when once engaged, he appears to have conducted himself with great spirit and prudence. He took the field against his sovereign,

[g] Froissart, Vol. I, Chap. xxx, cxvi.

[h] Philippa, queen of England, had been his godmother, and had given him her name. Froissart, Vol. II, Chap. lxxi.

1382.

and gained such advantages, that the count was speedily compelled to escape in disguise, and a second time to seek refuge in France [i].

Charles VI. marches against the Flemings.

The duke of Burgundy, third uncle to Charles VI, had married the only daughter of the Flemish sovereign, and was recognised by his father-in-law as heir to that principality. He was therefore forward to engage in the cause of the exiled prince, and had sufficient influence with the counsellors of the young king to induce them to resolve upon an expedition to chastise the revolt [k]. Philip d'Arteville foresaw the storm which impended over him, and applied on the part of his countrymen to the English court for assistance. The ministers of Richard II. gave some encouragement to his envoys, but treated the question upon which they were sent, with the indolence and procrastination which characterised all their measures [l]. The king talked in the spring, as we have seen, of a voyage-royal to France, and made some preparations in December. The proposal of the bishop of Norwich was also, by the king's order, submitted to the parliament which met in the close of the year, and approved by the commons, but did not receive the ultimate sanction of the legislature on that occasion. In the mean time an army of eighty thousand French was marched into Flanders with their young king at their head; and, after some fluctuations of success, a memorable battle was fought at Rosebecq, in which the invaders were completely

Battle of Rosebecq. November 27.

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[i] Froissart, Chap. xxxvii, et seq.

[k] Ditto, Chap. civ.

[l] Ditto, Chap. cvi, cvii, cxxviii, cxxxi.

CHAP. XLVIII. victorious, and Philip d'Arteville was killed fighting bravely for his country [m].

1382. Punishment of the Parisians. The discontented commons of France took advantage of this occasion, when the king, with his principal courtiers and the flower of his troops, was absent on foreign service, and renewed their former excesses. When Charles VI. returned from his successful campaign, he entered Paris like a conqueror, took away the gates of the city, barricadoed the streets, compelled the inhabitants to deliver up their arms and their leaders, and for fourteen days after his arrival put to death several of the insurgents daily by military execution [n]. Similar severities were employed at Rouen, Orleans, Troyes, and other principal towns of France.

1383. It was now that the English government first began seriously to think of affording aid to the Flemish insurgents. Ghent, the principal town, and the birth-place of the D'Artevilles, still shut its gates against the conqueror. Richard therefore, in the parliament which met in the commencement of the year, proposed to march in person to the relief of the besieged, and by the assistance of an English army to restore the affairs of the malcontents. The legislature objected to this project, and required that the king and his uncles should remain at home to resist the Scots, the truce with whom would expire in the present summer. They however recommended to Richard to accede to the proposal of the warlike bishop of Norwich [o].

[m] Froissart, Chap. cxvi.

[n] Ditto, Chap. cxx, cxxix, cxxx.

[o] Cotton, 6 Ric. 2.

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1383. Crusade of Henry Spencer.

A considerable degree of mystery hangs over this expedition. The whole of the proceedings came afterward to be canvassed in parliament[p]; and from them it appears that Richard had first required that the prelate should name the commander of the troops he purposed to raise, before the king would accept his proposition. To this the bishop demurred, but promised that such a general should be engaged as neither the king nor the legislature could disapprove. In his defence he seems to insinuate that he had offered the commission to John of Gaunt, but that they had broken off upon terms. This however is contradicted by the express stipulation of parliament that neither the king nor his uncles should cross the seas on this occasion. At last it appeared that he could find no sufficient general; perhaps he never intended to find any; and therefore in conclusion headed his crusade in person. The adventurous prelate was intoxicated with his success against the undisciplined insurgents of his own country, and believed that he had now an opportunity to inscribe his name with the Godfreys and the Lusignans.

His successes.

The French government was under no apprehension of hostilities on the part of England, and made no preparation to resist this crusade. The bishop therefore, indebted to their want of foresight and to the good will of the inhabitants, took many towns of Flanders, in rapid succession, immediately after his landing[q]. Every courier brought to England the intelligence of his progress; and for a short time he appears to have been as great a hero in

[p] Cotton, 7 Ric. 2.

[q] Froissart, Chap. cxxxii, &c.

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the eyes of his countrymen, as at the outfit of the expedition he had been in his own.

1383. Richard challenges the king of France.

Richard, with that promptitude of feeling which corresponded to his early years, caught the flame of military adventure from the trophies of the consecrated warrior. On this occasion he dispatched a very extraordinary challenge to his rival sovereign of France[r]. In the preamble he states, that he has recently called to mind the multiplied injuries, violations and losses which he and his predecessor had sustained from the obstinate resistance of the pretenders to that crown, together with the effusion of Christian blood, the despoiling of religious houses and churches, the deflowering of virgins, the violation of wives, the oppression of unarmed and innocent inhabitants, the peril of souls redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and a thousand other evils which neither pen nor tongue could describe. To put an end to these complicated mischiefs, he proposes a duel between himself and his competitor, body to body (each being now in the seventeenth year of his age); or between the two monarchs assisted respectively by their three uncles; or, if both these offers are declined, he calls upon his rival of France to appoint a day, when they should meet with their whole forces, to decide by mortal battle the question at issue between them.

At the same time that this challenge was dispatched, a patent was drawn, appointing John of Gaunt Richard's lieutenant for the kingdom of France, with powers scarcely

[r] Rymer, 7 Ric. 2, Sep. 8.

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1383. Renewal of the Scottish truce.

inferior to royal[s]. John of Gaunt had in the interval renewed the truce with the Scottish government[t], proceeding in this instance upon the same principles of policy as had regulated his conduct two years before. The day of the marches, as it was called, (or the period of the expiration of the truce then concluded) being come, some straggling parties of Scots had committed depredations on the English borders. But the Scottish government disavowed their hostilities, and offered to make compensation for the injuries which had been sustained. Such being the state of the parties, John of Gaunt willingly submitted to the unpopularity to be incurred by not drawing his sword for purposes of vengeance. The moral principles by which he was guided were too firm, to suffer him to proceed to the wanton effusion of blood. It is a trite and a plausible argument, to say that the inflicting of vengeance is the true means for the repressing of injury. But he knew by inference, and had found by experience, that in a case of this sort the contrary is the truth. Vengeance had always inspired into this rugged nation the thirst of further injury; while the negotiation and honourable intercourse he cultivated with the heads of that nation, operated to shut the injury within narrower bounds, and might in time have introduced a juster and nobler way of thinking between two people inhabiting the same island and speaking the same language.

John of Gaunt appointed lieutenant of France.

The king of Castille, having terminated this affair, entered upon measures to improve, and give stability, if

[s] Rymer, 7 Ric. 2, Sep. 12. [t] Ditto, 7 Ric. 2, Jul. 12.

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1383. Miscarriage of Spencer's expedition.

possible, to the acquisitions of the bishop of Norwich. But the purpose was frustrate and ineffectual. Almost before his commission was signed, the fate of the campaign was decided. The court of France, which had at first viewed the undertaking of these pious crusaders with contempt, was roused to resistance. Charles VI. marched against them with an army. The towns which had been taken were recovered with as much rapidity as they had been lost: and the episcopal commander was glad to obtain, through the mediation of the duke of Britanny, permission to return to England with the remains of his shattered forces [u]. The powers, communicated to the king of Castille, equally applied to the treating with the enemy, as to the encountering him in the field, as either should be found advisable: and, as the occasion of successful military adventure was escaped, a congress was sought for and obtained with the dukes of Berri and Britanny between Boulogne and Calais; and, soon after Christmas, a truce was agreed upon between the two powers, to endure till the ensuing autumn [x]. Henry earl of Derby, afterward Henry IV, of the same age as Richard II, was joined with his father in this negotiation.

Truce.

[u] Froissart, Chap. cxxxix, &c.

[x] Rymer, 7 Ric. 2, Jan. 26.

CHAP. XLIX.

CONSPIRACY AGAINST THE KING OF CASTILLE.—CONTENTION RESPECTING THE MAYORALTY OF LONDON.—CHAUCER TAKES PART IN THIS AFFAIR.—SUBORNATION OF FRIAR LATIMER.—MEASURES TO BRING JOHN OF GAUNT TO A PUBLIC TRIAL.—RECONCILIATION BETWEEN HIM AND RICHARD II.—CONSEQUENCES OF THESE PROCEEDINGS.

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1384.

THE project against the life and honour of the king of Castille became every day more ripe for execution. The courtiers of Richard II. continually incurred further unpopularity. A dissolute prince and profligate ministers made themselves no sincere friends either among the nobility or the people. Richard was now seventeen. This, in a youth of promise, is a very interesting period of human life. If we find him without discarding the blooming appearance, the frankness and graceful levity of his early years, reflecting upon his destination, cultivating a suitable reverence for his own powers, cherishing his unsullied character, and changing the restraint of tutors and pedagogues for self-tuition and a generous love of improvement, it is impossible we should observe this vernal season without sentiments of affection. But, as much as such

Critical age of Richard II.

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dispositions will be confessed interesting and lovely, so much shall we be disposed to regard with disapprobation and horror a youth, aspiring to manhood only that he may be more arrogantly vicious, a stranger to principle, sobriety or emulation, impudent, unthinking and dissipated, careless of his own reputation, and void of respect for age, or station, or talents, or experience, or virtue. This is nearly the most unnatural and monstrous of human characters; ignorance without deference, assuming manners with a total absence of merit, and a spring that brings with it no hope of a brilliant summer or of a ripe and luxuriant autumn.

Projects of the courtiers.

As the court of Richard, constituted as it now was, could advance small pretensions upon the public esteem, its members were proportionably jealous and impatient of that reputation in others, which they were neither able nor willing to cultivate for themselves. The king's three uncles were of course the first objects of their anxiety. The characters of each have been partly described. The earl of Cambridge was of a weak and easy temper, and occasioned them little umbrage. The earl of Buckingham had more energy and enterprise in his disposition than either of his brothers. But he was still young: he was only twenty-nine years of age, while the king of Castille was forty-four. He was besides hasty, outrageous and fierce; and this character they less dreaded than the grave and masculine demeanour of John of Gaunt. Perhaps the temper and manners of the young earl of Derby contributed to swell their animosity to his father. He was of the same age as Richard; but the dispositions of the two princes were in entire contrast with each other. The

Their competitors.

Edmund of Langley.

Thomas of Woodstock.

John of Gaunt.

Henry of Bolingbroke.

earl of Derby was as specious, as Richard was imprudent and dissolute. His mind was cool, subtle and ambitious; his carriage was gentle, condescending and popular. These features, the courtiers of Richard thought, constituted him a dangerous rival to their master. They further judged it a master-stroke of policy to strike at the king's eldest uncle at once. If he were destroyed, they thought the whole royal family would be subdued, and would either consent to join in dishonourable league with his murderers, or at least to purchase their own safety by a tame neutrality in the affairs of government.

Features of the conspiracy.

It has often been found a characteristic of courts, that they contemplate a murder under the forms of law, with perfect steadiness, and with no movements of compunction. All sense of justice gives way in their breast to calculations of expediency; and expediency soon subsides from a public consideration into a question completely selfish. They prepare the instruments of murder in secret, and no explosion precedes the stroke. They view the human figure of their destined victim; in their hearts they confess his innocence; they rejoice in his total freedom from apprehension and alarm; and they proceed to the meditated catastrophe. They drag him before a bar of self-named justice; they proceed with all the tedious forms of legal investigation; and they endeavour at one blow to destroy his reputation and his life. There is something more abhorrent to the genuine feelings of the human heart in this, than in any other species of assassination. It was thus that the ministers of Richard, the young earl of Oxford, and his seemingly decent and honourable associates, proceeded with slow and measured steps to the destruction

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of the first man, in rank, in proud and uncorrupted honour, and in qualifications for government, in the kingdom of England.

Contention respecting the mayoralty of London.

It is impossible, with the slender sources of information we possess, to trace the steps of this black and infamous design. The first transaction which has come down to us in the series, is a contention respecting the office of chief magistrate of the city of London, in which the king of Castille appears to have countenanced the popular candidate. Perhaps this prince anticipated the plan which was formed against his life, and found this, for some reasons, to be the proper place to make his stand against the enemy. His conduct in the present instance seems to be the first example of his deviating from the rule he had laid down to himself, of not interfering in the internal government of his country. We are reduced to derive our principal information respecting the affair from Walsingham; an historian, who not only shows himself on all occasions in the highest degree prejudiced against John of Gaunt, but who had an additional source of prejudice in the present instance, the popular candidate being, as he has informed us, a Lollard [a].

Sir Robert Tresilian.

The project for the destruction of John of Gaunt is stated on all hands to have been concerted with sir Robert Tresilian, chief justice of the king's bench, who was to adjust the legal proceedings, to combine the articles of accusation, and to see that the preliminary steps led to the fore-determined conclusion. Sir Robert had been par-

[a] Walsingham, A.D. 1382.

1384.

ticularly distinguished by his dexterity and dispatch in the trial of the insurgents, after the destruction of their leader in Smithfield. Stow observes, speaking of the sentence against John Ball, that this celebrated preacher "had judgment given him by sir Robert Tresilian knight a most skilfull justice, as a traytour to be drawne, hanged, headed and bowelled[b]." Sir Nicholas Brembar, the court candidate for the mayoralty, was the partner, in his public operations, of sir Robert Tresilian. He was, at least when the barons of the realm confederated against Richard, and the king found it necessary to proceed in a more advised and deliberate manner than he had previously done, a member of Richard's most secret councils; and he and Tresilian perished together upon the gallows in the year 1388. Sir Nicholas Brembar was one of the citizens who was knighted on the memorable occasion of the death of Wat Tyler. He is said by Stow, who, like all our other annalists, follows the leading of Walsingham, and paints every thing in the colours most unfavourable for John of Gaunt, to have been "oft times made maior against the minde of the citizens[c]."

Sir Nicholas Brembar.

The name of the popular candidate was John of Northampton. He is handed down to us as a great stickler for the reformation of manners. He was mayor, as was not unfrequent in these times, for the two preceding years, and is said to have represented to his fellow-citizens that, if he were not rechosen, the most deplorable profligacy

John of Northampton.

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[b] Stow, A. D. 1381.

[c] A. D. 1388. See also Knighton, ad eundem ann.

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would ensue[d]. He had been the author of certain edicts against usury, which were so favourably thought of in these times, that, several years after, the house of commons petitioned the king, that the orders made by John of Northampton, late mayor of London, against usury, might be executed throughout the realm[e]. He was also severe against fornicators, adulterers and incestuous persons; and on this subject became involved in a contest with the bishop of London, who insisted that such irregularities were only punishable by spiritual jurisdiction[f]. John of Northampton and his partisans alleged, that the clergy in their parishes were exceedingly remiss and corrupt on this subject, being accustomed to compound these offences for money, and that it was therefore necessary they should be subjected to the animadversion of some more impartial and vigilant authority.

State of the city of London.

The whole reign of Richard II. is distinguished by a certain hostility and contest between the court and the city of London. London had grown great and powerful, like the commercial towns of Flanders and Italy; its inhabitants were fully sensible of their newly acquired importance, and were prompt to repress the excesses and arbitrary measures of the king's favourites. The government however was much less sensible of their weight than they themselves were: a new power rising in a state is scarcely ever admitted to its due degree of ascendancy by the elder

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[d] Stow, Survey of London: temporal government.
[e] Ditto, by Strype, Book V, Chap. VI, A. D. 1382.
[f] Walsingham, A. D. 1382.

authority, but through debate and struggle and resolute contention. Richard is affirmed by the historians to have regarded the Londoners as his enemies; first, because they were forward to remonstrate against and censure the proceedings of his ministers, and, secondly, because they possessed great wealth; and he was accustomed, when they had fallen under his displeasure, to oblige them to purchase his forgiveness with large contributions in money. In the year 1392, under pretence of a riot, he committed the mayor, sheriffs, and certain principal citizens, to separate prisons, and published an ordinance, "that from thenceforth the Londoners should not choose nor have any maior, but that the king should appoint one of his knights to be ruler of the citie: their privileges were revoked, their liberties disannulled, and their laws abrogated [h]."

1384. Hostile conduct of Richard II. toward the citizens.

The question of the mayoralty of the present year was a step in the progress of that contention between the king and the citizens, which came to its crisis in 1392. Sir Nicholas Brembar, as we have seen, and no doubt others, had repeatedly been imposed as a mayor upon the city by the mere fiat of the court, in neglect of the choice of the citizens. This the popular party resolved no longer to endure. They probably fixed upon John of Northampton for the individual to be put forward on the present occasion, as being a man of more consideration, and more likely to unite the good wishes of the electors, than any other. He was, as we are told, a man of great wealth [i]; his abilities may be presumed, from the circumstance of an ordinance

[h] Walsingham and Stow, ad ann. Rymer, 16 Ric. 2, Jun. 25 and Jul. 22.

[i] Walsingham, A. D. 13[illegible].

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of his framing having been several years after consulted by the legislature as a model; the principles of his conduct as to public manners were vigorous, and not destitute of such knowledge or judgment as at that time existed in the community; and he was an adherent of the opinions of Wicliffe, which were now in the height of their popularity. The result however was favourable to the court party. Their intrigues on the present occasion were so assiduous, and their menaces so alarming, as ultimately to fix the majority of votes in favour of the candidate who was regarded by his fellow citizens with horror and aversion.

Chaucer involved in this affair.

Chaucer was engaged in this civic contention, as an abettor of the cause of John of Northampton[k]. To the part he took on the present occasion he was urged by some of the strongest motives that can influence the mind of man. The proceedings of the court were regarded by their authors as the first step toward the destruction of the king of Castille, a prince with whom Chaucer was connected by the obligation of a thousand benefits and by a long and most intimate friendship, whose youth he had probably contributed to form, whose virtues he probably admired and loved, whose apology (if we are correct in our explanation of the Complaint of the Black Knight) he had recently composed, and with the steadiness and rectitude of whose character he regarded the welfare of his country as intimately connected. There was some link of combination, that we are now unable to discover, which made the destruction of the city's liberties an indispensible preliminary to the ruin of John of Gaunt.

His attachment to John of Gaunt.

[k] Testament of Love, passim. See the following Chapter.

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1384. His patriotic sentiments.

Chaucer was also guided by the powerful interest which he felt in the welfare and prosperity of the city of London. He tells us of himself, in a passage formerly quoted[l], "More kindely love have I to that place, than to any other in yerth." We may be sure therefore that he witnessed, with a quick feeling and with powerful indignation, the practice of the profligate court of Richard, which was growing into a habit, of imposing upon his native place a chief magistrate by their arbitrary will. Chaucer must have been unworthy the name of a man, if he had seen the destruction of the liberties of his native place, combined with a black and infamous plot against the life of an innocent prince, perhaps the worthiest and most valuable member of the commonwealth, and not have exerted every faculty he possessed, to defeat it.

Sir Robert Knolles marches against the citizens.

It is related of John of Northampton on this occasion, that "with his seditions he filled the city full of *comber* [his patronymic name is said to have been Combertoun], and went up and downe with a multitude of seditious people to guard him, not once, but oftentimes, to the terrour of many[m]." These are the terms in which the proceedings of a popular candidate in a public election are usually described by his opponents. The seditions of John of Northampton however were presently quelled; sir Nicholas Brembar was installed in the office to which he had been unduly chosen; and sir Robert Knolles quelled the insurrection, by "drawing one of the ringleaders out

[l] Vol. I, Chap. I, p. 4.

[m] Walsingham and Stow, ad ann.

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of his house, and committing him to prison, who else was saide to have conspired the murther of sir Nicholas and many other worthy men [n]." According to another account, the disorder was suppressed by sir Robert Knolles striking off the head of one of the rioters [o]. The pretended rioter, who was thus put to death by military execution, appears to have been John Constantine, one of the most eminent of the citizens. The king of Castille and his partisans were entirely defeated. They acted on the usual principles of a civic contention, and confided in the spirit of the popular party to counteract the intrigues of the court. But the ministers of Richard preferred a briefer and more peremptory mode of proceeding, in which John of Gaunt was neither ready nor willing to cope with them.

Estimate of the cause in which Chaucer was engaged.

Mr. Tyrwhit very naturally expresses his surprise at Chaucer being so deeply engaged in what he styles "a trifling city-riot [p]." We may be certain that it did not appear to Chaucer in the light in which it appeared to Mr. Tyrwhit. He who would consider justly the transactions of distant ages, must be on his guard against the superciliousness and apathy which the interval of centuries is apt to produce upon him. Perhaps, if Richard had never resumed the city's charter in 1392, "revoked its privileges, disannulled its liberties, and abrogated its laws," London would not have been a jot more free at present than it now is. Yet ought I to blame the contemporary who felt indignation at the arbitrary and rapacious proceeding? Perhaps, if John

[n] Stow, ad ann.

[o] Walsingham, ad ann.

[p] Preface, Appendix C, note i.

of Gaunt had actually fallen by the machinations of judge Tresilian, we might not at the present hour experience any ill effects from it. Perhaps, if Algernon Sydney had escaped the unprincipled persecution of judge Jefferies, England might not now be happier than it is. Human beings must be contented to act in darkness and obscurity, and possessing only the materials of an uncertain guess as to the result of their actions. A candid observer therefore will look less to this, than to the feeling from which the actions sprung. We ought to love and admire the individual who generously sacrifices himself for the public, though the sacrifice should be useless. Besides, human beings must and ought to be powerfully influenced by motives which will make no important figure an hundred years after they are dead. Of what consequence will it probably be to future ages, whether my child, who has fallen into the river, be saved or drowned? Yet the father who in the moment of danger could entertain that thought, and from that consideration bid his heart cease to palpitate, would deservedly be regarded with execration by mankind.

Chaucer regarded the infant liberties of the city of London with all the warmth of affection. He considered her citizens as his brothers, and their posterity as his kindred. This era in the history of our metropolis was calculated to excite an high interest in his susceptible mind. Till about the thirteenth century, the inhabitants of England had consisted almost entirely of two classes: the proud and haughty barons or holders of knight's fees, on the one hand; and the villains, cultivators of the soil or mechanics, entirely at the disposal of their lords, on the other. Then came the dawn of what almost solely deserves the name of

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freedom. The wealthy merchants of England, as has been before remarked [q], were enabled to enter into a sort of competition with the ancient barons, which these latter wished perhaps, but were not able, to despise. The citizens had not yet learned the sordid habits of later times, and appear to have copied with success the purest models that were afforded them by their contemporaries. The names of Walworth, Philpot, Picard and Whittington rank among the most venerable in the annals of the fourteenth century.

Success of the court.

The contest for the first magistracy of the city was terminated in the present instance by the interposition of a military despotism. Sir Robert Knolles, who, in the predatory wars of the Companions after the peace of Bretigni, had been accustomed to overbear and oppress the unarmed citizen, put some of the leaders to death, and conveyed others into strong imprisonment. John of Northampton was committed first to Corffe-Castle in the county of Dorset, and afterward to Carisbrook-Castle in the isle of Wight [r]. A resolution was taken to bring him to trial for his life before judge Tresilian, the convenient instrument of the court. A similar process was prepared against Chaucer, who fled for safety to the province of Zealand.

Chaucer flies.

John of Gaunt marches against the Scots.

During these transactions John of Gaunt was absent upon the public service in Scotland. He was not able on this, as he had been on former occasions, to prevent the commencement of hostilities on the borders. The antipope had sent his letters of crusade into Scotland; and

[q] Vol. I, Chap. I, p. 12.

[r] Mss. Rymer, Ric. II, Vol. II, No. 109, 129.

this, cooperating with the old jealousies between the two countries, overpowered for the present the conciliatory and honourable modes of proceeding of the king of Castille. He was compelled to repress the inroads of the Scots by force of arms; he took possession of Edinburgh, and drove their forces beyond the wall of Antoninus. They then consented to the renewal of the truce[s].

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Parliament at Salisbury.

A parliament was summoned to meet at Salisbury on the twentieth of April[t]. There seems always to have been some secret meaning, some mysterious and crooked project in hand, when in these times the parliament was not permitted to resort to its customary place of assembly. The design in the present instance pointed at John of Gaunt. The ministers of Richard conceived that the time had arrived to strike their final blow. They had suppressed, or awed into silence, the party of this prince in the metropolis. They had vested the legal powers of the city-government in a creature of the court. They had driven Chaucer into exile, whose advice might have been of the most essential service to his master, and whose talents might perhaps have aided in digesting the materials of his defence. Still it seems they did not think they had sufficiently secured the success of their conspiracy, unless they removed the legislature to a distance from London.

Information of Friar Latimer.

When the parliament met, the king of Castille was still absent upon his expedition into Scotland. Shortly afterward he returned. An accusation of the gravest nature

[s] Walsingham, ad ann.

[t] Cotton, 7. Ric. 2.

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was then preferred against him. One John Latimer, an Irishman and a friar of the order of Carmelites, presented to the king a schedule containing an information against John of Gaunt, in which he was charged with a design to destroy the king, and to usurp the crown[a]. Time, place, and other circumstances were specified in the scroll; and the writer added a solemn adjuration upon the sacrament which he had that day received, that every particular contained in his allegation was true.

communicated to John of Gaunt.

Very contrary to the intention of the authors of the accusation, John of Gaunt entered the presence of Richard, the moment after he had read the paper he had received[a]. With the ingennousness natural to his age, the young king displayed in his countenance and manner the dark thoughts which he had just conceived of his uncle. John of Gaunt observed the extraordinary coldness and severity of his demeanour, and urged him to explain the cause of his anger. Richard, after some hesitation, was overcome by the importunity of his uncle, and put into the hands of John of Gaunt the scroll he had been perusing.

His defence.

The accused prince discovered all the surprise, indignation and horror, natural on such an occasion. He protested that not a thought had ever entered his mind injurious to his nephew, and that the continual object of his solicitudes had been the king's prosperity and welfare. With the vehemence and flow of language which innocence supplies to a proud and elevated mind, he asked, how he could be more eligibly situated than as the first and richest subject in the

[a] Walsingham, ad ann

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realm, and whether Richard could believe that the English nation would endure that he should occupy a throne to which he had prepared the way by the murder of his nephew? He intreated however that the charges against him might undergo the minutest investigation, and requested that in the mean time friar Latimer might be committed to custody, and not suffered to elude the scrutiny of his accusations. Richard was convinced, by what was said, of his uncle's integrity, and cheerfully assented to every thing he proposed. The unfortunate accuser was committed to the custody of two knights, one of whom was sir John Holland, the king's uterine brother, to be produced hereafter for the deliberate examination of what he had alleged.

The feelings of John of Gaunt were those of a proud and unsullied honour, basely aspersed. He broke out into no violence; he did not condescend to insinuate that this miserable friar had been suborned by persons who had views deeper than his own; and he conducted himself with that firmness and sobriety which strongly conciliated the favour and good opinion of his nephew. The feelings of his friends were far different. They could not endure with patience to see the life and honour of so excellent a prince thus trifled with by a set of unprincipled courtiers for their private ends. The earl of Buckingham no sooner heard of what had passed, than he hurried to the king, burst into his chamber, and, disdaining all decorum in the vehemence of his resentment, declared, with a torrent of oaths and execrations, that he was ready to fight any one, even Richard himself, who should dare to utter an insinuation to the disadvantage of his brother's character.

Resentment of Thomas of Woodstock.

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1384.

Catastrophe of the informer.

A further circumstance took place, strongly demonstrative of the barbarity and lawlessness of these times. Sir John Holland had married the eldest daughter of the king of Castille, and was no less zealously attached to his interest than the earl of Buckingham. He had the unhappy accuser in his custody; he was persuaded of his father-in-law's innocence; and entertained little doubt as to the quarter from which the base conspiracy had originated. With the sternness of a feudal baron and a soldier, he questioned the friar as to the persons who had prompted his conduct, he threatened him, and at length subjected him, as it is said with his own hands, to the torture. The friar expired in consequence of the severity with which he was treated. His keepers, even in death regarding him as a traitor, caused his body to be dragged through the streets upon a sledge, as if he had been publicly convicted of the crimes with which they charged him.

Inferences from this event.

Walsingham says that, while the friar lived, he was universally regarded as a false accuser; but that, being thus illegally put to death, the innocence of John of Gaunt was rendered suspicious, and many now believed him guilty, who had before been satisfied of his loyalty and honour. This however is not the natural construction of what passed. The conduct of sir John Holland exactly corresponds with that of the earl of Buckingham, and in both we perceive the indignation of men convinced of the untainted innocence of their friend. The manner in which the indignation expressed itself belongs to the general character of the times, and not to the circumstances of this particular case, except as it serves to show the unbounded warmth of attachment which the qualities of John of

Gaunt excited in his friends. Add to which, it would be contrary to every principle of reasoning, to infer, from the supposed ambiguity attending the fate of friar Latimer, a guilt in the king of Castille which would stand in complete opposition to the whole tenor of his actions. An assassination, such as was spoken of in the present accusation, was not correspondent to the spirit of the times. If John of Gaunt had designed the subversion of his nephew's reign, he would have formed a hostile party in parliament, he would have given birth to a confederacy of the discontented barons, and have excited a civil war against the crown; in a word, he would have pursued the same measures, as his brother, Thomas of Woodstock, subsequently adopted with that intention. By such means it was perhaps practicable for him to have obtained the crown. He would have swelled the multitude of his partisans; he would have brought them into a situation in which their reconciliation with the crown would have been desperate; he would have moulded them gradually to his purpose, and insensibly familiarised them to the idea of his mounting the throne. It was by these means that the descendants of the house of York afterward deprived the posterity of the king of Castille of the crown. Nothing could be more just than the argument employed by John of Gaunt in his expostulation to Richard, that he would have found, in a naked and abrupt assassination, not his path to royalty, but to the detestation and abhorrence of the whole mass of his countrymen.

1384. Improbability of the accusation.

John of Gaunt employed in France.

The king of Castille, having escaped the snare which had thus been spread for his life, was again employed, as

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before, in negotiation with the princes of France [x]. He accordingly passed the seas for that purpose; and the result of his journey was an extension of the truce to the ensuing spring [y].

The frankness of his temper led John of Gaunt to believe that all further question of treasonable accusation against him was now dismissed. But the feelings of the ministers of Richard were very different from his imaginations. The more they found themselves baffled and disgraced in their first exertion, the more intently did they set themselves, with new caution and duplicity, to pursue the purpose in which they were embarked.

Trial of John of Northampton.

They first resolved, as the adversaries of the king of Castille appear uniformly to have done, to improve the advantage of his absence on the public service. They brought his partisan, John of Northampton, to trial. The chaplain of this citizen was the principal witness against him, "uttering many things that he went about and had devised, as well to the hinderance and harme of the king, as of the city of London." Northampton remonstrated against the proceeding, and maintained that his trial "ought not to passe in absence of his lord the duke of Lancaster." But he was silenced by judge Tresilian, who in reply exclaimed, "John, the naughty deeds that are obiected against thee, thou oughtest to refel by battel, or els by the lawes of the land to be drawne, hanged and quartered." In conclusion, sentence of confiscation and perpetual imprisonment was

[x] Rymer, 7 Ric. 2, May 27.

[y] Ditto, 8 Ric. 2, Sep. 14.

1384.

pronounced against him[1]. One of the sheriffs of the preceding year and another principal citizen were included in the same sentence.

1385.

Further conspiracy against the king of Castille.

The ministers of Richard saw their error in not having in the former instance sufficiently trusted their master with the secret of their designs. They had reposed with confidence upon the effect of the forged accusation of friar Latimer; but the accidentally coming in of the innocent prince had overturned their contrivances. They now proceeded after a different manner. They considered that Richard, however specious and engaging might be his manner to strangers, had a mind, to which the principles of rectitude had never been communicated, or in the soil of which the seeds of rectitude refused to germinate. He was madly addicted to his pleasures. They had only to represent to him his venerable uncle as the bar to his licentiousness, in order to obtain his assent to the blackest project they could suggest to him. They told him that he was a monarch, and that the unseasonable intrusion of grave and severe lessons upon his youth was treason. They asked him for what purpose the plenitude of power was confided to his hands, if he was not to use it for the removal of obstacles to his enjoyment? They assured him that the people would never presume to enquire into the reasons of his measures; but were impressed with that becoming deference for their king, which would lead them to believe that whatever severities he thought proper to adopt against his uncle were right.

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[1] Walsingham and Stow, ad ann.

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A further variation introduced by them into the project of the present year, was that, whereas in the former instance they had deemed it safe to arraign the king of Castille before a parliament assembled for that purpose at a distance from the metropolis, they now held it requisite to make their blow more sudden, and of less publicity. A special commission was given to judge Tresilian to try the accusations it might be thought proper to prefer [a]; and thus the first prince of the blood was to be made the victim of an obscure, irregular and illegal jurisdiction.

The project was already in great forwardness, and a writ for his arrest in order to trial was made out, when intelligence was conveyed to him, by some secret friend, of the danger in which he stood. He was greatly astonished at what he heard, and saw that this was no time to trifle with his safety. If Richard, who had so lately and so fully been convinced of his innocence, yielded his assent to this new proceeding, he saw that he had neither favour nor justice to expect from the throne. He understood the corrupt practices which then prevailed in the courts of law, and how unblushing a contempt for integrity and honesty, was hid under the awe-inspiring robes of national justice. He knew that if, with his rank and public importance, he were once arraigned at the bar on a capital indictment, nothing but a powerful interposition of force could save him from the scaffold. The ministers of the crown, after having put upon him so foul an indignity, would never dare to let him go free. The

[a] Walsingham, ad ann.

1385.

voice of innocence in that place, instead of availing to baffle their conspiracy, would sound like the weakest and most driveling pedantry that ever was devised.

Retires to Pomfret.

In this emergence the measure adopted by the king of Castille was to withdraw himself privately and hasten to his strong castle of Pomfret, which he fortified with great diligence and care. Joan, the dowager princess of Wales, who only survived this period by a few months, now interposed to save her son from the guilt and ruin upon the brink of which he stood. She had shut herself up in retirement, stung to the heart at the unhappy courses in which the young king was engaged; but she could not remain inactive on so awful an occasion as had now arrived. She undertook in her own person to mediate a peace between the king and his uncle, and, though corpulent and unfit for travel, journeyed with diligence between the one and the other: and such were the unaffected expressions of loyalty on the part of John of Gaunt, and so earnest and impressive the expostulations addressed to the king by his mother, that the breach was healed, and a perfect reconciliation effected [b].

Mediation of the king's mother.

Reconciliation of John of Gaunt and the king.

Consequences of these proceedings.

This was the crisis of the reign of Richard. Such was the equanimity and placable temper of John of Gaunt, and so dearly did he cherish the principles of loyalty to his kinsman, and zeal for the public tranquillity, as never to have betrayed during the remainder of his life any resentment of the deadly offences which the king had com-

[b] Walsingham, ad ann.

CHAP. XLIX. 1385. mitted against him. He shortly after set out upon an expedition into Spain, in which he was engaged for some years, and after his return showed himself on all occasions the steadiest and most disinterested friend the unhappy Richard ever had. But such were not the feelings of the public in general, or of the friends of the king of Castille in particular. Richard, by consenting, on the most frivolous pretences, and with no inducement to impel him but his infatuated love of dishonourable pleasure, to bring his uncle to the scaffold, had established a character with the nation, which no further instances of weakness or guilt could aggravate, and no subsequent amendment could erase. Thomas of Woodstock, whose intemperate zeal in the cause of his eldest brother has been described, was of a very different cast of mind from his. With abilities which have been considered as superior to those of John of Gaunt, he had an impetuousness of temper, which did not easily yield to the control of reason or principle. The loyalty of John of Gaunt was proof against every trial; but Thomas of Woodstock was much more under the empire of his private feelings. From this moment he cast off all forbearance for Richard. He contemplated with impatience and horror the crime of conspiring against the life of the most eminent, and, as he believed, the most virtuous, citizen of England. He despised the king as a man, and he scorned to make any artificial distinctions between the man and the magistrate. He swore eternal animosity against his sovereign. No sooner had the winds and waves borne his elder brother to a distant clime, and delivered him from

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the ascendant of his well-harmonised temper and deliberate wisdom, than he began a war against Richard which knew no restraint from kindred, loyalty or humanity. His hostility, taken up on grounds so impressive and powerful, ended only with his life; and both Richard and himself finally became the victims of this inexpiable contention.

CHAP. L.

CHAUCER IN EXILE. — HIS PECUNIARY EMBARRASSMENTS. — RETURNS TO ENGLAND.—IMPRISONED IN THE TOWER.—USURPATION OF THOMAS OF WOODSTOCK.—CHAUCER IS DEPRIVED OF HIS EMPLOYMENTS.—SELLS HIS PENSIONS.—IMPEACHES HIS FORMER ASSOCIATES.—TESTAMENT OF LOVE.

CHAP. L.

1385.

Chaucer in the Netherlands.

AFTER the affair of John of Northampton, Chaucer spent several years in adversity and distress. As his exile was a voluntary precaution on his part, it would seem reasonable to have supposed that it commenced about the time of the arrest of this popular leader. This however appears not to have been the case. In the Clause Rolls of Richard II, there is a grant to Chaucer, dated in the month of November 1384, of leave of absence from the duties of his office for one month, on urgent business relative to his private affairs[a]: he was therefore certainly at this time in England. It is difficult to conceive what reason he could have found for flight, above nine months after the arrest of John of Northampton, and

[a] Appendix, No.

three months subsequently to the trial of that ringleader and the sentence pronounced against him.

Chaucer is said to have passed first to Hainault, of which his father-in-law was a native[b]; and afterward repaired to the province of Zealand, where he seems to have fixed his principal residence on this occasion[c]. Here he met with several of the persons who had been involved with him in the late disturbances, and who like him had judged it prudent to seek their safety in flight. What were the fortune and situation in life of these persons we are not informed: Chaucer however had brought away with him a larger supply of money than they, or was more successful in obtaining remittances from home; and, with that liberality which we should expect from the gentleness and kindness of his temper, was eager to supply their wants and relieve their distress[d].

Assists his fellows in exile.

These persons, he tells us, were afterward driven out of Zealand[c]. It is not easy to account for their expulsion on any other supposition, than that they were pursued by the animosity of the English court, and that the government of these provinces, by way of compliment to Richard, refused any longer to shelter them. Chaucer was not driven out: he was therefore regarded with less antipathy by the ministers of Richard. He was not even deprived of his office of comptroller of the customs; and in the beginning of the year 1385, when it is perhaps reasonable to suppose that

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[b] Life of Chaucer, prefixed to Urry's Edition.

[c] Testament of Love, Book I, page 488, col. 1, Urry's Edition.

[d] Ditto, p. 487, col. 2.

CHAP. L. 1385.

he was already in exile, a patent was issued in his favour, permitting him to execute its functions by deputy[e]. His situation with the government of his country could not have been very desperate, at a moment when they granted him an indulgence which he had never presumed to solicit in the season of his highest favour.

Treachery of his friends at home.

But, notwithstanding the comparative forbearance of the English government, the embarrassments which Chaucer suffered were exceedingly great. The persons to whom he intrusted the management of his affairs in absence, appear to have been some of those who had been involved with him in the affair of Northampton; but, instead of proving faithful to the confidence he reposed in them, they acted with the basest treachery, detained from him his income, and let out his apartments to hire, without accounting to him for the rent, with the purpose, as he says, of causing him to perish for want of necessaries[f].

Is accompanied by his wife.

From this statement it appears to follow that Chaucer took his wife with him, if she were living when he went into exile. Had she remained at home to superintend his concerns, it is not probable that he could have been exposed to so great misfortunes. Hence we may infer that the attachment, which subsisted so long between them even before marriage, had not subsided. Prudence would have dictated their separation. But Chaucer was too deeply pervaded with the human and domestic affections, to be able to consent to such a measure. He chose rather to expose himself to every distress, and to trust to the pro-

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[e] Appendix, No.

[f] Testament of Love, Book I, page 488, col. 1.

verbially uncertain tenure of friendship in adversity, than to tear himself from his dearest connections [s]. CHAP. L. 1385.

His children.

The family of Chaucer, so far as their names have come down to us, consisted of two sons: Thomas, afterward speaker of the house of commons; and Lewis, to whom he has addressed his Conclusions of the Astrolabie. The age of Thomas, at the period of his father's exile, was about thirteen; and Lewis was in his fourth year. Whether he was accompanied by both of them in his flight is uncertain; it is probable that, if the wife of Chaucer attended him, they also took with them their youngest son. Chaucer, as we have seen, was desirous to effect what is proverbially called the raising a family; that is, to place his posterity in such a manner with respect to fortune and station, as to produce a sort of probability that their descendants for

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[s] Rymer has preserved, in his manuscript collection, a receipt, signed by Chaucer, of half a year's pension to himself, and half a year's to Philippa his wife, a copy of which is inserted in the Appendix to this volume. Taking this as my guide, I entertained a very sanguine hope of obtaining an exact account of the dates of the commencement and close of Chaucer's matrimonial life. Could the series of these receipts be found, these dates might with great probability be inferred from the period at which the receipts given by Chaucer in behalf of his wife began and finished. Her pension was conferred upon her, in consideration of her having been maid of honour to the queen of Edward III. She was therefore probably an unmarried woman at the time it was granted, was in the receipt of it at the period of her marriage, and continued to receive it till her death. It is not unlikely that the whole series of these receipts is still in existence; but I have been unsuccessful in my endeavour to discover where they are deposited. I applied successively to the Exchequer-Office in the Temple, to the Office of the Clerk of the Pells in Westminster-Hall, and to the Record-Office in the Chapter-House of Westminster Abbey. From all the persons to whom I applied I experienced the greatest politeness and attention, but all concurred in the most positive assurances that no such records exist in their offices.

CHAP. L. 1385. several generations would rank among the more eminent members of the commonwealth of England. We may therefore believe that one of the anxieties he suffered in his adversity, arose from the miscarriage he seemed destined to suffer in this favourite scheme.

Thomas Chaucer was at this time thirteen years of age. We may draw some conclusion as to his talents and the respectability of his character, from the high station of speaker which he occupied in successive parliaments, from his having married into an eminent and opulent family, and from his leaving a posterity by his only daughter, who had a very near prospect of ascending the throne. He could not have had a character which naturally led to these honours, without possessing qualities at the age of thirteen, which, to an eye so practised and discerning as that of the poet, must have led to great expectations and fond visions of what the boy might one day prove. We may believe that he was carefully educated, for we know that his brother was so educated: and perhaps the age at which young Chaucer had now arrived is one of the most interesting periods of human life. It is an epoch when so much of understanding, adventure, imagination, perseverance and integrity may have manifested themselves, as no longer to expose the fond father to an alarm lest all his hopes of his darling child may be mere phantoms of the brain; at the same time that, the destination of the child being not yet unfolded, the father has room to amuse himself with a thousand varying pictures of greatness, talents and worth, and at the close of his reverie to pronounce with complacency, One of these shall my son assuredly be! What was the fortune of the younger

son of Chaucer, or even whether he ever arrived at manhood, is unknown: we have only his father's testimony to the ripeness of his intellect, as well as to the ardour of his own paternal affection, in the circumstance of his having addressed a treatise of astronomy to this son at the age of ten years. We may believe then that, when Chaucer viewed the enterprising youth of thirteen, and the helpless child of four, he pronounced to himself, that scarcely any question of party, any course to be steered in the doubtful and uncharted sea of politics, could justify him in having risqued the consigning these children to obscurity, and exposing them to all the temptations, contumelies and intellectual famine of a poor estate.

His embarrassments.

Chaucer's residence in the Netherlands proved to him a continual source of anxiety. His resources failed: his friends not only deserted, but added to that baseness the guilt of robbing him. By every favourable wind he expected supplies from England; but every wind brought him nothing but disappointment. Perhaps he expected a more kind and hospitable reception from his wife's relations than they extended to him. Perhaps he had that high spirit, which is found extremely congenial to an enlarged mind, that prompted him to refuse obligations. It is very probable that in Hainault he found relations of his wife, who were in a capacity to afford him pecuniary assistance. The reigning sovereign of the country, Albert, duke of Bavaria, and earl of Holland, Hainault and Zealand, was brother of the prince who had married Matilda of Lancaster, sister to Blanche; and it is likely that this sovereign would not have permitted the poet to

CHAP. L. 1385. suffer any extreme distress. But Chaucer, who had for many years lived a life of opulence and filled situations of eminence in his own country, could not perhaps brook the idea of receiving a precarious and eleemosynary subsistence in a foreign land. In fine he resolved, rather than languish in exile and beggary, to return home, and submit his life, if necessary, to the laws and lawyers of his country.

Chaucer had, till now, been a stranger to misfortune. We have seen reason to believe that he was the son, perhaps the only son, of an opulent tradesman. He received a distinguished and expensive education; and tried his fortune in what men have agreed to call the honourable profession, of the law. He had scarcely entered this career, when he was withdrawn from it by the invitation of Edward III. He was domiciliated under the wing of the palace; he was employed to form the mind of a prince possessing a thousand advantages from nature and fortune, who proved to him a constant friend, and was perpetually loading him with benefits and favour. He was essentially the court poet without the formality of the name; and if we, at this distance of time, through the veil of a language to us obsolete and semi-barbarous, and with poets who have improved upon the half-assured essays of Chaucer in the degree that Spenser and Shakespear and Milton have done, cannot read his compositions without confessing the great and the genuine poet, it is easy to imagine what must have been the idolatry of his contemporaries, when his works were brought into notice by the sunshine of royal favour, when his language was perfection and grace,

and when, from the rarity of the spectacle, a poet was regarded as more than man, and such productions as those of Chaucer were deemed the perfection, the Hercules' Pillars, of human genius. Encouraged, though not rendered capricious and insolent, by these advantages, Chaucer gave the reins to his inclination, studied no rigid maxims of economy, and indulged with no less freedom and unconstraint the costly pleasures of the table and of an elegant style of life, than the more genuine and simple delights of study, or of a solitary and romantic excursion among woods and hills and streams.

His retired and destitute situation.

It must therefore have been a bitter trial that Chaucer sustained in the period of his exile. He was poor; deserted by his old friends, who cruelly took advantage of his absence to oppress and destroy him; with no admirers, no hospitable greeting, perhaps not one sympathising sentiment beyond the bosom of his own family: and this to him, who had been surrounded with flatterers, whose name the voice of eulogium had dwelt upon till the very echo was tired with repetition, whose visits had made a holiday, and whose presence had been every where cheered with welcome. Chaucer did not, like Milton, when he travelled into foreign parts, present the inhabitants of the different countries he visited with specimens of his genius in the language most familiar to those inhabitants. In this one respect at least he was prouder than his sublime successor. He knew that the delicate and discriminating cultivation of one language is a task mighty enough for one genius. He disdained to prattle in a foreign tongue, "of whiche," as he says, "Englishmen have as gode a fantasye, as the Jay

CHAP. L. 1385.

whan he chatereth Englishe [h];" and he good-humouredly laughed at the attempts of his friend Gower in this kind. The consequence however was, that, when he came into the Netherlands, he came among a people who had no preconceived consciousness of his merit, and who, as to the power of relishing what he had produced, were not less barbarous than Ovid had found the borderers upon the Euxine sea.

1386. Returns to England.

Chaucer returned to England, full of indignation against the persons to whom he had confided his affairs in his absence. They were some of those who had been engaged with him in the affair of John of Northampton; for, when he gives vent to his resentment against them, he at the same time expresses his sorrow for the part he had taken in city-politics, from a conviction that, whatever were the merits of the cause in which he had been engaged, the persons with whom he had acted were, many of them, such as it was no way honourable to him to have been connected with. He therefore came back to his native soil, anxious to withdraw from the cares and turmoils of political contention; and, though willing, as we may suppose, to make every exertion that gratitude or friendship could demand for the service of John of Gaunt, yet resolved not again to volunteer in the struggles of opposing parties, nor hastily to believe, because a cause was good, and the end in view was honourable, that the persons engaged in that cause were public-spirited, and would

[h] Testament of Love, Prologue.

disinterestedly and honestly cooperate in the measures necessary to secure its success. He therefore hoped, divorced as he was from his former associates by the treachery of their conduct, that he should be suffered to remain obscure and unmolested in the bosom of his country.

Imprisoned in the Tower.

In this however he had been too sanguine. What were the motives of the ministers of Richard for taking him into custody is doubtful. According to his own account, they were desirous of extorting from him some confession as to his confederates. Satisfied, as they were, of the innocence and honour of the king of Castille, they perhaps hoped to gather from Chaucer something that might be tortured into an accusation against his patron, and might enable them to revive and eke out their infamous prosecution of this virtuous prince. Chaucer had scarcely arrived in England, before he was arrested by an order from the court, and committed prisoner, as is supposed, to the Tower.

Examined as a witness in the court-military.

The first indication which can be traced of Chaucer being again in England, occurs in the month of October 1386. It was at this period that he gave the testimony to which we have already had occasion to refer, in the remarkable cause of Scroop and Grosvenor, at the church of St. Margaret, Westminster[1]. Supposing therefore that he made use of his leave of absence, granted in November 1384, to retire to the continent, his exile continued for nearly two years. If this were not the date of his flight,

[1] Vol. I, Appendix, No. I.

CHAP. L.

1386.

it must have taken place later, and of course have continued for a shorter period. From these premises it seems to follow that he was brought up from the Tower to give his testimony in this cause, by an order from the court-military, who must be supposed to have been furnished with sufficient powers for that purpose.

Is stripped of his public offices.

It must also have been during his imprisonment in the Tower, that he was deprived of the two offices, which he had now held for years, and which, as he informs us, he had always executed with the highest honour and the strictest integrity[j], of comptroller of the customs in the port of London, and comptroller of the small customs. In December of this year Adam Yerdeley was appointed to the first of these situations[k], and Henry Gisors to the second[l], in the very terms of the patents by which they had formerly been conferred upon Chaucer.

by Thomas of Woodstock, duke of Gloucester.

The date of this dismission of Chaucer from the places of consideration and profit which he had held for so long a time is entitled to notice. Thomas of Woodstock, making use of the parliament as his instrument, superseded the royal authority in October, and vested the whole functions of the government in the hands of fourteen persons nominated for that purpose[m]. Two months after this extraordinary stretch of power, Chaucer was reduced to a private station. It was against the administration of the king that he had struggled in 1384; it was by them that he was driven into exile, and that, having chosen to

Suspension of the royal authority.

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[j] Testament of Love, Book II, p. 502, col. 1.

[k] Dec. 4. Pat. 10 Ric. 2, p. 1, m. 9. [l] Dec. 14. Ditto, m. 4.

[m] Knighton, ad ann.

return to his native country, he was committed to the Tower. Yet they treated him with the veneration due to his unrivalled genius, and never proceeded to extremities against him. When he was most exposed to the displeasure of the crown, they had the liberality to grant him permission to execute that office by deputy, which he was no longer able to execute in person. It was reserved for Thomas of Woodstock, the patron of Gower, and who had so lately shown himself the vehement and intemperate partisan of John of Gaunt, but in whom ambition finally swallowed up every other sentiment, while he continued Chaucer's confinement in the Tower, to deprive him of his principal means of competence and subsistence.

Chronology of Chaucer's exile and imprisonment.

It is necessary however that we should observe that we have circumstantial evidence alone of Chaucer having been concerned in the proceedings of John of Northampton. I was very desirous of finding the copy of the warrant committing Chaucer to prison; and for that purpose searched the Clause Rolls of the eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth years of Richard II, in other words, of the period from the twenty-first of June 1384 to the twenty-first of June 1389, but without success. This warrant, if discovered, would probably have afforded sufficient materials of deciding respecting the cause, as well as the period, of Chaucer's imprisonment.

But, without this voucher, the story seems to be attended with sufficient evidence. Chaucer's exile, return, and imprisonment in the Tower, rest upon his own authority, but are unaccompanied with dates. The cause of his misfortunes he thus describes. "In my youth I was drawe to be assentaunt and in my mightes helping

CHAP. L. 1386.

to certaine [n] conjuracions and other grete matters of rulynge of citezins; and [o] thylke thinges ben my drawers in and exitours to tho matters, werne so painted and coloured, that, at the prime face, [p] me seemed them noble and glorious to al the peple. I than, [q] wenynge mykell merite have deserved in furthering and maintenaunce of tho thinges, [r] besyed and laboured with all my diligence, in werking of thilke matters to the ende. And trewly, to tell you the [s] sothe, [t] me rought lytell of any hate of the [v] mighty senatours in thilke cité, ne of [u] communes malice, for two [w] skilles: one was, I [x] had comforte to ben in soche plite, that both profite were to me and to my frendes; another was, [y] for commen profite in comunaltie is not, but pece and tranquilité with just governaunce proceden from thilke profite; [z] sithen me thought the [a] first painted thinges, malice and evyll meninge, withouten any gode [b] availinge to anye peple, and of tyrannye purposed [c]."

Chaucer then states the pretences and modes of reasoning brought forward by the party he embraced. "The thinges whiche, quod they, ben for commune avauntage,

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[n] confederacies.

[o] the motives which drew me in and excited me to the measures I pursued, were so coloured by the persons whose leading I followed.

[p] they appeared to me. [q] believing that I should deserve well of the public.

[r] busied myself. [s] sooth. [t] I took little account. [v] the magistrates.

[u] the common people. [w] reasons, SAX.

[x] saw myself to be in such circumstances, as enabled me to be of service both to myself and my friends.

[y] a belief that the social state produces no general advantage, unless it is attended with peace and tranquillity, and a just and impartial government.

[z] besides, moreover.

[a] the things varnished and glossed over to sight by the royal party, to have been.

[b] descending, following. [c] Testament of Love, Book I, p. 485, col. 2.

maye not stand, [d] but we ben executours of tho matters, and auctorité of execucion by [e] comen election to us be delyvered; and that muste enter by strength of [f] your maintenaunce; for, we out of soch degre put, oppression of these olde hindrers shal againe [g] surmounten, and putten you in soche subjection that in endlesse wo ye shul complaine. The governementes, quod thei, of your cité, left in the handes of [h] torcencious citezins, shal bring in pestilence and destruccion to you gode menne; and therfore let us have the comune administration to abate soche yvelles. There ben citezins many, for [i] ferde of execucion that shall be done for extorcions by hem committed, ben evermore ayenst these purposes and al other gode meninges [j]." He adds, "And so, when it fell that fre eleccion, by grete clamour of [k] moche peple [who], for grete disese of misgovernaunce, so fervently [l] stoden in ther eleccion that they hem submitted to every [m] maner face, rather than have suffered the maner and the rule of the [n] hated governours (notwithstandyng that in the contrary helden moch comune [o] meiny, that have no consideracion but onelye to voluntary lustes withouten reson), than thilke governour so forsaken, [p] faininge toforne his undoinge for misrule in his time, [q] shope to have letted thilke eleccion, and have made a newe him selfe to have bene chosen, and [r] under that mokyl rore arered [j]."

CHAP. L.

1386.

[d] unless. [e] common. [f] the citizens'. [g] come up, arise.
[h] usurious, using extortion. Speght. [i] fear. [j] p. 486, col. 2.
[k] the court party. [l] stood, persisted. [m] imaginable disadvantage.
[n] the popular party. [o] followers, adherents. Fr.
[p] conceiving beforehand, anticipating. [q] purposed to have hindered.
[r] under that pretence raised a great uproar and commotion.

CHAP. L.

1386.

This description coincides in so many particulars with Walsingham's account of the proceedings of John of Northampton, that it is almost impossible to doubt that these were the proceedings in which the poet found himself so deeply entangled. If Chaucer describes the measures adopted by the popular party less favourably than we should expect from a confederate, or than the measures probably deserved, it should be considered that, in the work from which the above extracts are taken, one of his objects is to deliver his recantation, and reconcile himself with the government he had offended. Elsewhere he says of himself in the course of the work, "Thy worldly godes ben [s]fulliche dispente, and thou berafte out of dignitie of office [t]." This proves to a certainty, that the composition was not written till after the close of the year 1386.

Convulsive state of England in the tenth and eleventh years of Richard II.

To the period in which, as it appears, Chaucer was committed to the Tower, succeeded a long series of civil broils and contention, during which he probably was almost forgotten by those who had it in their power to restore to him the advantages of liberty. The same hand which gave away the employments of the poet, had annihilated the royal authority, and reduced the king to a cipher. Richard did not remain supine under the indignities which were heaped upon him. Under pretence of escorting his favourite Vere, who, it had been agreed upon with the usurper, was to be sent into a sort of honourable exile in Ireland, he left the metropolis, and

1387.

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[s] fully.

[t] p. 490, col. 2.

journeyed into Wales [u]; but, having remained some time there, he turned back, and, with Vere, De la Pole, Tresilian and others, held a council at Nottingham respecting the best means to be employed for resuming the royal authority [x]. The commissioners who now possessed the government of the realm, were alarmed at the intelligence of what was going forward; and with great art and a thousand specious insinuations, induced Richard to return to the metropolis [x]. No measure could have been more fatal to his interests. From the moment in which he acceded to this proposal, he became virtually a prisoner. The inexorable Woodstock proceeded without mercy to the destruction of as many of the advisers and creatures of the court, as he could get into his power. He called together a parliament; and, as the assembly of that sort which stained the annals of the last reign was surnamed the Good Parliament, so this, equally a favourite with the blind and undistinguishing vulgar, gained the appellation of the Wonder-working Parliament [y]. One day, they sent sir Robert Tresilian and sir Nicholas Brembar to the gallows; and another, they passed sentence of death upon six of the judges [x]. Previously to this ceremony, these magistrates were publicly dragged from their seats in Westminster Hall, and committed to the Tower [x]. The pretext of their condemnation was the opinion they had signed at Nottingham, declaring the commission, which had deprived Richard of the government and vested the royal

CHAP. L.
1387.
August 25.
November 10.
1388.
February.

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[u] Walsingham, ad ann. [x] Knighton, ad ann. [y] Stow, ad ann.

CHAP. L. 1388.

authority in a council of fourteen persons, to be contrary to the law and constitution of England. Their sentence was afterward commuted into banishment for life. The lawyer who officially drew up the paper which they were arraigned for signing, was also condemned, and executed [a]. Sir Simon Burley and three other persons of great distinction about the court were the next victims; and Woodstock is said to have permitted the queen to remain three hours on her knees before him, intreating in vain for the life of this accomplished courtier [b].

Situation of Chaucer in this period.

During these scenes of tumult and confusion Chaucer remained a prisoner, in the centre of all the violences that were committing, and unable either to act or to escape. It is probable that, in this fierce contention as to who should be master of the kingdom, he was considered as a person of inferior consequence, and obliged to yield his apartments to some statesman of loftier title who was a few days after conducted to the scaffold. He could not feel much at ease in the circumstances in which he was placed; and perhaps scarcely knew whether his personal safety would best be promoted by the continuance of the usurpation, or by the restoration of the royal authority. He had been an officer of the government; he had been favoured and distinguished by Anne of Bohemia; and it might be doubted whether the stern and savage Woodstock, who had already stripped him of his employments, would not find a time to proceed to the last extremities against him. On the other hand, if the king were re-

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[a] Parliamentary History of England, ad ann. [b] Hume, ad ann.

stored, the prospects of Chaucer would not be much improved. It was the king and his ministers that he had offended; it was the king who had driven him into exile, and who, when he privately returned, consigned him as a state-prisoner to the Tower. He had therefore little to hope, and something to fear, from the revival of the royal authority. CHAP. L. 1388.

Chaucer has thrown out many allusions to the ease and opulence he had formerly enjoyed. "I, that some tyme in delicious houres was wont to enjoy blisful [b] stoundes, am now dryve by unhappy [c] hevinesse to bewaile my sondrie [d] yvels in [e] tene.—Thus, [f] witlesse, thoughtfull, [g] sightlesse lokynge, I endure my penaunce in this derke prisonne, [h] caitiffned fro frendshippe and acquaintaunce, and forsaken of al that any worde dare speke [i]." And again, "Although I hadde lyttell, in [j] respecte amonge other grete and worthy, yet had I a faire [k] parcel, as me thought for the tyme, in [l] forthering of my sustenaunce.—I had richesse suffisauntly to [m] weive nede; I had dignité to be reverenced in worship. Power me thought that I had to kepe fro min enemies; and me semed to shine in glory of renome.—Every of tho joyes is turned into his contrary: for richesse, now have I povertie; for dignitie, now am I enprisoned; in stede of power, wretchednesse I suffre; and, for glory of renome, I am now dispised and [n] fouliche hated [o]."

[b] seasons. [c] adversity. [d] evils. [e] sorrow. [f] void of foresight.
[g] looking at a blank. [h] captived. [i] Testament of Love, Book I, init.
[j] comparison. [k] portion. [l] furthering, procuring.
[m] wave, prevent. [n] foully. [o] Book II, p. 502, col. 1.

CHAP. L.

1388.
Sells his pensions.

Nor in these complaints was the poet guilty of any exaggeration. We have seen that, early in his imprisonment, he was stripped, by the prevailing party, of the official appointments which had supplied the principal part of his income. In May 1388, we again find him obtaining a patent[p], permitting him to resign the two pensions of twenty marks each, which were all that now remained to him of the bounty of the crown, and which were now probably exchanged for the money demanded by the urgent and immediate wants of himself and his family.

1389.
His employments in prison.

It is in adversity, more than on any other occasion, that a well-ordered mind reaps to the full the pre-acquired advantages of literature, cultivation and reflection. The muse,—the muse that had won the ear of his former sovereigns, and that had been the primary cause of his fortune during life, as well as of his lasting fame,—accompanied Chaucer to the gloomy and dreary walls in which he was now shut up. Cast down among common men, he yet did not feel like a common man. In this uncertainty, humiliation and solitude, he recollected his former pursuits, the cherished visions of his happier days, and became again an author. It is likely that he was forbidden the visits of his friends; but by the magic power of fancy he called about him celestial visitants. It is likely that a jailor or a turnkey was planted in his apartment, under pretence of checking unlicensed attempts at correspondence or escape, but in reality serving only to exclude him from one of the best inheritances of man, the power of being alone in the silence of elemental nature and with his own thoughts. Chaucer

[p] Appendix, No. XVIII.

however, assisted by the workings of his mind, instead of seeing continually the base groom who attended him, saw only the Gods who protected and cheered him in his cell.

Testament of Love.

Chaucer in his youth had translated Boethius. The best work of Boethius, that which Chaucer had put into English, was composed by the Roman while he was a state-prisoner under the reign of Theodoric king of the Goths. In the prison in which he was immured, Boethius, soon after he had finished the work, was murdered by order of the tyrant. Chaucer, in the gloomy reveries of his fancy, reaped a certain pleasure in imagining a parallel between himself and the virtuous Boethius. Boethius was accused of having been concerned in certain attempts for the liberties of Rome: Chaucer had also offended the dishonest government of England by attempts for the liberties of his native city. Boethius has been applauded by all succeeding times as the last citizen of Rome who was worthy of the name of a Roman: Chaucer also hoped that he should be remembered as the strenuous adversary of that profligate administration of Richard II, who, by the measures into which they had entered, prepared the tragical catastrophe which overtook their master at the immature age of thirty-two. Boethius united in his own person the characters of the patriot, the poet, and the firm and philosophical mind superior to events: and Chaucer, in the adversity which overclouded him, naturally wished that hereafter in these respects he might be classed with Boethius. Influenced by this wish, he sat down to write an imitation of the admired work of the Roman; and, as Boethius had penned the Consolation of Philosophy, Chaucer wrote, in a style much more mystical and obscure, but suitable to the taste of his age, the Testament of Love.

CHAP. L.

1389.

Compared with Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy.

Chaucer however does not appear altogether to the advantage he desired, in the comparison with Boethius. Not only the Testament of Love is much inferior, as a literary composition, to the Consolation of Philosophy; but the personal character, and moral and sentimental discipline of the mind, of Chaucer are by no means presented in so favourable a light in this composition, as the temper of Boethius is exhibited in the work of the Roman. The Testament of Love is interesting to a reader of taste, because such an one will be eager to trace the workings of the mind of Chaucer, when deliberating about his fate, and anxious for the unexplored and unknown future; and because we are always delighted to see a man possessing the vigour and elasticity in the midst of calamity, to employ his talents, and to call up the resources of reason and literature. But the pleasure we experience in the perusal of Boethius goes beyond this. We see him cheerful in defiance of oppression, and exercising a strong and unfettered talent while his tormentors were almost at the door. An unvitiated observer will love even the weaknesses of our nature, and will hate the Stoic of the domestic scene. But the weaknesses which wake in our bosoms the pulse of approbation, are those of sympathy, anxiety for the fate of others, and an entire and full participation in their feelings. We love the man who is inconsolable for the danger of his friend, and inconsolable for his loss. But, in the midst of disasters which personally affect himself, it is glorious, or, which is better, it is honourable, for him to be serene.

Boethius, though a Christian, had been bred in the school of Pagan philosophy. Chaucer was a Christian of that school which was formed by monks, and consummated

by friars. It was scarcely possible for a man thus educated, to look death in the face, on the bed of sickness, or in the solitude of the closet, with serenity. The death-bed of those ages was studiously set round by the clergy with penitences, and accompanied by an army of terrors. Its great lesson was pusillanimity. In the series of successive centuries, we shall scarcely find a single example in the middle ages of a man led to the place of execution, except for the cause of religion, who met death with firmness. The heroes and patriots of this period were of a different stamp from those of earlier or later times; and, though highly entitled to our commendation, they want a certain finish particularly calculated to render the recollection of them interesting to us [q]. Chaucer's production, written from his

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[q] One solitary instance of exception offers itself at this period in the history of France, so beautiful and interesting, that it would be almost treason against the character of the human species as it existed in the fourteenth century, to omit it. Jean Desmarets, advocate general to Charles VI, had offended the duke of Burgundy, the king's uncle, by resisting some of his prodigal measures. The duke, who was of a most vindictive temper, seized the occasion of the insurrection in 1382, and contrived to have the name of this innocent and virtuous magistrate included in the list of those who were destined to atone with their lives the guilt of the rebellion. Desmarets, who was above seventy years of age, was dragged to the place of execution amidst the sympathies and astonishment of innumerable spectators. Arrived there, he was exhorted to cry out for pardon from the king; and it was intimated to him that by that submission he might save his life. "I have rendered," answered the grey-haired magistrate, "a true and loyal service to king Philip his great-grandsire, to king John his grandfather, and to king Charles who begot him; none of these princes ever charged me with disloyalty or neglect, nor would the king that now is, if he had attained the age and discernment of a man: I will cry out for mercy to God alone." Saying this, he came forward with a look of serenity and fortitude, and submitted his neck to the stroke of the executioner.

Villaret, Histoire de France, ad ann.

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prison in the Tower, is infected with all these faults: he complains too much and too grievously, to possess the proper advantage for exciting our commiseration. It is not to be expressed how much these habits of mind tended to place the virtues and the honour of the oppressed at the mercy of the oppressor, and to inspire the prosperous man with hard and ungenerous dispositions toward his victim.

Its allegorical style.

The Testament of Love is to a considerable degree an allegorical composition. Chaucer says, "In this boke be many privie thinges [r] wimpled and fold, [s] unneth shull [t] leude men the [v] plites unwinde [u]." How much of it was understood by his contemporaries it is not easy for us to decide; they had the advantage of being bred in the school of allegory, and were accustomed to guess its riddles. In every substitution of one name or one thing for another, however arbitrary it may be in appearance, writers of the same period, modified by the same opinions and manners, and reading each other's productions, will inevitably fall into a similar method; so that a familiar acquaintance with a series of compositions of this sort must afford great advantage for the explanation of any one of them. That advantage is now scarcely to be procured; and therefore to readers of the present day the "many privie thinges" folded up by Chaucer in his work will not without great difficulty be penetrated.

Marguerite.

The most remarkable circumstance in the allegory of

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[r] muffled, wrapped. [s] not easily, scarcely. [t] ignorant.
[v] plaits, intricacies. [u] Book III, p. 519, col. 2.

this performance is the use made of the term Marguerite. The author, toward the conclusion, shows himself willing to afford his reader every assistance which he deemed necessary or convenient to prevent the misinterpretation of his work. With this view he thus expresses himself. "Also I praie that every man parfitelie [x] mowe knowe, through what intencion of [y] hert this tretise have I drawe. How was it the [z] sightfull manna in desert to children of Israel was spirituell mete? Bodily also it was; for mennes bodies it norisheth. And yet [a] never the later, Christe it signified. Right so a jewell [b] betokeneth a gemme, and that is a stone vertuous, or els a perle. Margarite, a woman, [b] betokeneth grace, lernyng or wisedome of God, or els holie churche. If [c] bred through vertue is made holie fleshe, what is it that our God saith? It is the spirit that yeveth life, the fleshe of nothyng it profiteth [d]."

Marguerite therefore in the Testament of Love, it seems, represents spiritual consolation. This however does not prevent Chaucer through his whole performance from considering it as the name of a woman. He praises her peerless beauty, and laments his unworthiness to obtain her favour; he addresses her in the language of courtship, and intreats that she will not always show herself obdurate to his addresses. In one passage of his work, he completely forgets the allegorical sense in which he wishes to be understood, and has the literal woman so clearly before his fancy, that he exclaims, "Alas, that ever [e] kind

[x] may. [y] heart. [z] visible. [a] nevertheless. [b] signifies.
[c] bread through divine interposition. [d] Book III, ubi supra. [e] nature.

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made her [f] dedlie [g]!"—a topic of regret which can scarcely be thought applicable to that intellectual treasure which he professes to have shadowed in his Marguerite.

Testament of Love compared with the Complaint of the Black Knight.

It may be here observed, that the plan upon which the Testament of Love is constructed, has a considerable tendency to confirm the interpretation which has been given above of the Complaint of the Black Knight. The same turn of mind which dictated the allegory in the one case, would have led to the writing in an allegorical sense in the other: nor is there any thing more harsh and strained in representing loyalty under the image of love, than in describing spiritual consolation under the figure of a beautiful woman, and typifying the attainment of God's grace by the humble pursuit of this lady's favour.—It is sufficiently singular that, so late as the end of the sixteenth century, Shakespear composed more than one hundred and fifty sonnets, which, in their literal sense, are addressed to a man, with all the forms and expressions of the passion of love; but which probably cover some secret meaning that no critic has hitherto been so fortunate as to penetrate.

Shakespear's Sonnets.

Chaucer's character of himself.

One passage in the Testament of Love deserves to be quoted, as expressing Chaucer's opinion of his writings, formed when he had already arrived at a very ripe age, and was now placed under a cloud of peril and adversity, of which it was not easy for him to discern the issue. The sense he expresses of his own merits is not conveyed in terms altogether so elevated as those employed by Horace [h].

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[f] mortal. [g] Book II, p. 505. col. 1.
[h] Carmina, Lib. III, Carmen xxx.

and Ovid[i], but which perhaps for that very reason convey the idea of a more sober and full persuasion of the claims he possessed to the commendation of mankind.

The work principally consists of a dialogue between the prisoner and Love, who visits him in his cell, as Philosophy visited the prison of Boethius. Toward the close of their conversations, a question arises respecting predestination, a favourite topic among literary men in the times of Chaucer. For the purpose of introducing his own eulogium, the author chooses to forget the identity between himself and the writer of those performances which had so greatly illustrated the literature of England, and makes Love answer thus to the difficulties propounded by her pupil. "I shall tell the, this lesson to lerne,—Myne owne true servaunte, the noble philosophicall poete in Englishe (whiche evermore hym busieth and travaileth right sore my name to increse; wherfore all that willen me gode, owe to doe him worship and reverence both; truly his better ne his [k] pere in schole of my rules coud I never finde)—He, quod she, in a tretise that he made of my servaunt Troilus, hath this matter touched, and at the full this question [l] assoiled. Certainly his noble saiyngs can I not amend: in godenes of gentil [m] manlich spech without any maner of nicitie of [n] starieres imaginacion, in wit, and in gode reson of [o] sentence, he passeth al other [p] makers [q]."

It is remarkable that in this passage Chaucer commends

Testament of Love written previously to the Legende of Gode Women.

[i] Metamorphoses, Lib. XV, ver. 871. [k] peer. [l] absolved, solved.
[m] manly. [n] This word is explained by none of the glossarists.
[o] judgment, *sententia.* [p] poets. [q] Book III, p. 518, col. 2.

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himself in unqualified terms as the true servant of Love, and his poem of Troilus and Creseide as an honourable example of that service; in both these points contradicting the admissions of an opposite sort, and the apology, contained in the Prologue to the Legende of Gode Women. Hence it may perhaps be inferred, first, that the Legende was not written till after the period of Chaucer's disgrace, and was a sort of courtly compliment offered to the queen on his restoration to favour; secondly, that the Good Queen Anne had some share at least in obtaining his pardon; and thirdly, that it was in the Testament of Love, when he laboured under calamity and depression, that Chaucer first adopted the mystical system of notions intended to be signified under the worship of the daisy.

Anne of Bohemia obtains Chaucer his pardon.

Chaucer now first adopts the mystical worship of the Marguerite, or daisy.

Restoration of Richard II.

Richard II. had now been for about two years and a half stripped of the prerogatives of royalty, and boiled with sentiments of impatience at the thought of his degraded situation. He did not fail to comment upon the violence and intemperance of Woodstock's proceedings; he was persuaded that, however the bloody executions of the Wonder-working Parliament and the inexorable temper betrayed by his uncle on that occasion might obtain the applause of the moment, they would not prove the basis of a lasting popularity. Men have a natural bias in favour of regular proceedings and old institutions; and there was no reason to doubt that, if Richard skilfully watched his opportunity, he might easily regain all he had lost. The present was a violent state of things, and was ill calculated to last. Richard was young; he had done little of a positive nature to forfeit the affections of his subjects; he had been saved

from perpetrating the worst crimes he meditated, by the auspicious interference of his mother or his consort. He was now twenty-two years of age, a period of life at which a man seems entitled to trial, and which is favourable to a certain degree of discretion. It was obvious that every thing was tending to the restoration of royal authority; and little was required of the king, more than to claim in a manly and spirited tone the place to which he was born. CHAP. L. 1389.

Richard II. seems at this time to have had able advisers. He came forward in the council-chamber, and asked what was the age to which he had attained? He was answered by some who were secretly prepared for the scene. Am I not of an age then, rejoined he, to take the reins of government into my own hands, and to be no longer under the management of tutors[r]? by this language avoiding to throw impeachment upon the conduct of the usurpers, and merely signifying to them that their authority was at an end. He then proceeded to take the great seal from the present chancellor[s], and to dismiss Woodstock and his associates from their employments. He took no vengeance upon his adversaries; he recalled none of his obnoxious ministers; he published a general pardon; and he remitted to his subjects a half-tenth and half-fifteenth which had been granted him by parliament. This revolution was effected without resistance; and the imprudences and excesses of both parties seemed mutually consigned to oblivion.

It was on the third of May that Richard II. defeated the

[r] Walsingham, ad ann.

[s] Rymer, 12 R. 2, Mai. 3.

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party of his uncle, Thomas of Woodstock; and on the twelfth of July following, Chaucer was appointed to the honourable and lucrative office of clerk of the works. The nearness of these dates naturally leads to the inference that there was some connection between the events, and tends to confirm the conjecture already delivered that Chaucer owed his liberation to the interposition of the queen. Unhappily, however, he did not obtain his enlargement unconditionally; and the terms upon which it was yielded form the principal blemish in the life of the poet.

Chaucer set at liberty.

Impeaches his former associates.

The advisers of Richard II. insisted that Chaucer should not be set at liberty, till he had made an ample confession of what they called his misdemeanours, and had impeached his former associates. To this proposal he ultimately yielded: and, as he tells us in the performance we have been considering, offered to prove the truth of his information, by entering, according to the modes of the times, the lists of combat with the parties accused; which they, as he adds, knowing the veracity of his allegations, declined[1].

Date of the Testament of Love.

The Testament of Love, as appears from various allusions to the situation of the author in the course of the production, was written after Chaucer had given in his confession, and before he was liberated from confinement. It may therefore be referred to the month of June of the present year. His confession, which was made to the king, could not have been delivered earlier than May. From October 1386 to May 1389 Richard was totally stripped of authority; and Chaucer could have had no motive to degrade

[1] Book I, p. 487, col. 1.

himself by such a confession, and such an impeachment of the partisans with whom he had been engaged, as he appears to have yielded to. On the other hand, it may well be believed that, when he was appointed in July clerk of the works, he was no longer under confinement in the Tower. The work however, as will shortly be seen, was not published sooner than the year 1393. CHAP. L. 1389.

In the imperfect knowledge we possess respecting the transactions of this period, we are somewhat at a loss to conjecture what could be the motives of the ministers of Richard II. for extorting from Chaucer the concession of which we are speaking. It is scarcely to be imagined that they did it for the sole purpose of degrading his character: at the same time that John of Northampton and his confederates would hardly appear of importance enough to be made objects of prosecution after so long an interval. In fact, Northampton obtained his pardon from the crown in the following year [u]. Chaucer himself seems to refer to persons of a higher rank than that of magistrates of the city of London, when he says, "Of tho confederacies maked by my soverains, I [x] nas but a servaunt [y]." The memoirs and documents of the times, however, lend us no assistance in discovering the individuals. It could not be Woodstock and the heads of the usurpation; for Richard conducted himself toward them on this occasion with the greatest forbearance and clemency. Least of all, could it be John of Gaunt; for from this time forward, though the dissimilitude of character between him and the king Nature of Chaucer's information.

[u] Pat. 14 Ric. 2, p. 1, m. 4.
[x] ne was, was not.
[y] Book II, p. 502, col. 1.

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His conduct censured. This undoubtedly is the circumstance in the life of Chaucer, which conveys the most unfavourable impression of him to modern times. He stands here in the light of a person, who accepted the confidence of a certain party; who, from the persuasion that they might safely trust him, was admitted into their secrets; who partook of their counsels, and shared their attempts; and who afterward purchased his safety by betraying his associates. Nothing can justify such a conduct, but the supposition that the individual by whom it is adopted has been deluded into some project of an exceedingly criminal nature, that he is afterward led by his reflections to see it in its true enormity, and that no way remains to prevent the perpetration but by a judicial impeachment: such a situation is described in the person of Jaffier in abbé St. Réal's narrative of the Conspiracy of Venice. In that case the treachery employed may be admitted to be commendable, and in some degree to atone for the weakness and guilt incurred by the accuser in the beginning of the transaction.

But the situation of Chaucer was by no means of this sort. The confederacy into which he had entered was probably a commendable one; and the end for which it had been formed had passed by, and the confederacy been dissolved, before Chaucer gave information respecting his associates.

His motives. What then were the motives of his conduct? He has himself assigned one, in the indignation which he had conceived Resentment. against them. They had plotted to starve him, had cut

off his supplies, and embezzled his income. He probably thought that no measures were to be kept with persons who had conducted themselves toward him so basely. He was impatient of being any longer accounted their ally. All that was resentful in his nature was stirred up at the thought of the treatment he had endured; and he felt as if it would be an offence against morality and human nature to suffer such villainy to go unpunished. These sentiments are undoubtedly congenial to the mind of a man deeply injured; and especially when the injury proceeds from those for whom he has sacrificed much, whom he has liberally assisted in their difficulties, and for his connection with whom he is even still suffering calamity and distress. Such sentiments may extenuate what is offensive in the conduct of Chaucer in this instance, but cannot justify it. He who pursues retribution for the offences of others, should firmly refuse to obtain it by any sacrifice of the dignity and rectitude of his own character.

Timidity.

Perhaps however Chaucer was influenced in his compliance with the importunities and threats of the administration, by a certain degree of timidity and irresolution. This is a very common feature of human character; and, though it must be confessed to be a blemish, is not destructive of the fundamental principles of a virtuous temper. Chaucer, it may be, was inaccessible to the attacks of corruption; he boasts very loudly, in the performance we are considering, of his unimpeachable integrity in the execution of his functions as a servant of the crown [a]. He was not

Degree of censure due to this defect.

[a] Book II, p. 502, col. 1.

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easily intimidated; or induced, by calamity or fear, to turn aside from his course: he was for a considerable period faithful to his engagements with his associates, and, as he tells us, "conceled ther privitie lenger then he should [a]." Such a man might be an excellent member of private and domestic society, a true patriot, and a genuine lover of mankind; he might be a stranger to the selfish passions, and to that mutability which is so pernicious to the best purposes of life; generous, tender, affectionate, warm-hearted and charitable. With such endowments, a man might have passed through life in twenty different stations, and not a speck of soil have fastened upon the whiteness of his actions; had not that single temptation occurred against which alone he was not proof, had not misfortune maliciously conspired to direct her attacks against the only imperfect and vulnerable point of his nature.

Duration of Chaucer's adversity.

In estimating the morality of Chaucer's conduct on this occasion, it is also incumbent upon us to take into the account the length of his misfortunes and his imprisonment. From the documents and the reasonings we have produced it seems clearly to follow, that his confinement in the Tower endured for no less a period than three years. He had perhaps been an exile for two years previously to his imprisonment. He had passed through an accumulation of evils; starved for want of remittances abroad, and reduced to sell the slender pittance which remained to him in the form of a pension, for subsistence. He whose resolution holds out during five years of calamity and distress, is no

[a] Book I, p. 488, col. 1.

fickle and effeminate character. If Chaucer, who had witnessed the anarchy of his country, and the tragical scenes which were transacted almost in his presence, who had been reduced to barter his last resources for bread, and who saw an affectionate wife and a cherished offspring in danger to perish for want, felt at length subdued and willing to give up somewhat of the sternness of his virtue, we may condemn him as moralists, but we cannot fail in some degree to sympathise with feelings which make an essential part of our nature.

Chaucer the sole historian of his own weakness.

One idea arises in this place, which cannot fail to strike us as interesting and instructive. Chaucer tells us, that his conduct in this instance involved him in a torrent of ill will, and brought upon him the charge of being false, lying, base and ungrateful. It was principally to defend himself against these charges, that he composed his elaborate performance of the Testament of Love.

It is probable that the lapse of a single generation would have blotted out from the memory of his countrymen these censures upon the father of English poetry. Who now appears as his accuser? Chaucer: Chaucer only. We have no evidence but what we draw from this production, that he was ever concerned in the turmoils of the city, that he was an exile, a prisoner in the Tower, and that he was finally led by resentment or by terror to the dishonourable act of impeaching his confederates. Little did the poet think, when he sat down to write this laborious apology for his conduct, that he was hereby perpetuating an imputation, which without his interference Time was preparing to blot out for ever from the records of memory, while his poetical compositions were destined to render him dear to

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the lovers of the muse as long as the English language shall endure. How feeble and erroneous are the calculations of the wisest of mankind!

But what is most extraordinary is, that the Testament of Love was not published under the immediate uneasiness and impatience of the moment, and did not receive the last hand of the author till several years after. This is evident from Gower speaking of it as an unfinished work in the sixteenth year of Richard II, in some lines which we shall presently have occasion to quote. Chaucer therefore did not enter the field against his censurers while the accusations to which he was exposed were yet in their vigour; but brought forward his defence at a time when, as we may reasonably suppose, the malignity of which he complained had lost its venom, and he had been fully restored to his place in the community.

CHAP. LI.

CHAUCER APPOINTED CLERK OF THE WORKS.—JOHN OF GAUNT RETURNS TO ENGLAND AFTER AN ABSENCE OF THREE YEARS. —CREATED DUKE OF AQUITAINE.—CHAUCER RESIGNS HIS OFFICE, AND RETIRES TO WOODSTOCK.—CONCLUSIONS OF THE ASTROLABIE.—BREACH BETWEEN CHAUCER AND GOWER.—CANTERBURY TALES.—PENSION OF TWENTY POUNDS *PER ANNUM.*

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Spanish expedition of John of Gaunt.

JOHN of Gaunt, as we have seen, sailed for Spain in the month of May 1386. He took with him an army of twenty thousand men; with sir Thomas Percy, afterward earl of Worcester, as admiral of his fleet, and sir John Holland as constable of his forces[a]. The king presented him, in a solemn audience of leave, with a crown of gold, and the queen made a similar present to his consort; and a proclamation was issued that every one should acknow-

[a] Froissart, Vol. III, Chap. xxix. Knighton, ad ann. The number (20,000) is taken from Knighton; who however, stating the army a few lines further in a different way, makes it to have consisted of 2,000 men at arms and 8,000 archers; a more probable computation.

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ledge them for king and queen of Spain. A considerable portion of the Castillians regarded the title of his consort, the legitimate heir to the throne of that kingdom, as sacred; and he had been invited to the enterprise by John king of Portugal, whose dominions were laid claim to, and his capital besieged, by the reigning king of Castille, son to Henry of Transtamare.

1387. Philippa of Lancaster married to the king of Portugal.

The military success of this enterprise was such as it was not difficult to have foreseen. John of Gaunt, having landed at Corunna in the month of August, gained some advantages, and took several towns. He married his eldest daughter by the princess Blanche to his royal ally [b]. But the progress he made was by no means decisive; and he lost more by the unhappy effects of the climate, than he had gained by the military prowess of himself and his followers. He therefore found it necessary, in the autumn of the following year, to retire with his forces into that part of the duchy of Aquitaine which was still possessed by the English [c].

John of Gaunt retires into Aquitaine.

1388. Treaty of peace between him and the reigning king of Castille.

Here a circumstance of good fortune attended him, which served in some measure to balance the miscarriage of his expedition. A negotiation was opened for the marriage of his only daughter by his Spanish consort, with the duke of Berri one of the uncles of the king of France; and John, the reigning monarch of Castille, hearing of the proposal, and being alarmed for the consequences which might arise from placing the claim to his crown in

[b] Froissart, Chap. xxxvii, xxxviii, xxxix. Knighton, ad ann.
[c] Froissart, Chap. lxxxvii, &c.

such hands, immediately resolved, by the most alluring overtures on his part, to defeat the project[d]. In conclusion, the princess was married to Henry prince of Asturias, eldest son to the king in possession; two hundred thousand nobles were given to John of Gaunt to indemnify him for the expences of his expedition[e]; and a pension of ten thousand pounds *per annum* was settled out of the revenues of Castille upon himself and his consort respectively[f]. He returned to London in November 1389, bringing with him, according to Knighton, forty-seven mules loaded with chests of gold[g]; and it has been noticed among the effects of his enterprise, that he succeeded on this occasion in entailing the crowns both of Portugal and Castille upon the heads of his descendants. He of course surrendered at this time his personal claims to the Spanish sovereignty.

1388. Catherine of Lancaster married to the prince of Asturias.

1389. John of Gaunt returns to London.

The return of John of Gaunt to his native country, after an absence of more than three years, was hailed with the warmest congratulations. The king had already suc-

[d] Froissart, Chap. cxiii, cxxxiii. [e] Ditto, Chap. cxxxviii.

[f] Walsingham, A. D. 1389. Sixteen thousand marks upon John of Gaunt and twelve thousand upon his consort: Knighton, ad ann. It is difficult to compute the value of John of Gaunt's acquisitions on this occasion. They are variously stated in the contemporary authors; and the writ in Rymer (Vol. VII, 12 Ric. 2, Aug. 26) by which the treaty is confirmed, does not enter upon these particulars. The sums in the text would amount to a prompt payment of £. 1,200,000 in modern money, and a pension of £. 360,000 *per annum*. But this seems to exceed belief. Knighton however says that John of Gaunt brought away with him only half the indemnification; and the pensions were perhaps never paid.

[g] Knighton, ad ann.

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ceeded in putting an end to the usurpation of Thomas of Woodstock; he was inclined to conduct himself with forbearance and moderation toward those who had so deeply offended him; and the task was congenial to the dispositions of John of Gaunt, to reconcile the differences, and restore good understanding and kindness, between persons whose true interests were the same. The result of his return to his native country displayed itself in general harmony; and he was rewarded by Richard with a grant of the fief of the duchy of Aquitaine in the same manner in which it had been enjoyed by his elder brother the Black Prince [h].

Created duke of Aquitaine.

Calumny of Leland refuted.

An absurd story has been introduced in this place, of John of Gaunt advancing a demand in full parliament, that his eldest son, afterward Henry IV, should be recognised as presumptive heir to the crown [i]. The true heir, in case of Richard dying without issue, was Roger Mortimer earl of March, eldest son of Philippa, the only daughter of Lionel duke of Clarence; and he had accordingly been recognised in that character in the year 1387 [k]. John of Gaunt's proposal is referred to the year 1396 [i]. It is extraordinary that such a tale should have been so often repeated [l], and never have been refuted.

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[h] Rymer, 13 Ric. 2, Mar. 2. It has been stated on the authority of Froissart (Vol. IV, Chap. lxiv), that John of Gaunt, a few years after, again resigned the duchy of Aquitaine into the hands of the king. (Collins, Life of John of Gaunt; 19 Ric. 2.) Walsingham asserts the same thing. This however is not true. He is described by the titles of the late duke of Aquitaine and Lancaster, in a patent of Richard II, dated a few weeks after his death. (The patent is recited in the Rolls, 1 Hen. 4, p. 1, m. 10.)

[i] Leland, Collectanea, Tom. I, p. 383. [k] Sandford, Book III, Chap. xiv.

[l] See Sandford, Book IV, Chap. i, and Collins, Life of Gaunt, ad ann.

An argument is by the historians put into the mouth of John of Gaunt, founded upon the ambiguity of the surname of Crouchback, which had been given to Edmund earl of Lancaster, brother to Edward I. The true meaning of this name refers to the cross worn on the backs of those who had taken the vow of pilgrimage or crusade to the Holy Land; in the same manner as the inhabitants of a certain monastery were called the Crutched, or Crossed, Friars [m]. The tale however represents John of Gaunt as stating Edmund to be twin to his brother the king (though he was in reality nearly six years younger [n]), and adding that, his back having been broken in his infancy, he was set aside from the succession, though the first born, and Edward I. preferred before him. The story proceeds to say, that the earl of March replied to John of Gaunt, affirming that Edmund Crouchback was a most elegant figure, and a very valiant soldier, as might be seen in the chronicles.—The earl of March was at this time lieutenant of Ireland, and appears not to have visited England for several years [o]. No pretence could be more disgraceful from the lips of John of Gaunt, than one which thus represented his ancestors for several generations as usurpers. If he had been a man of unlicensed ambition, this could never have led him to contemplate with desire the idea of living a subject under the reign of his son: he was at this time only fifty-six years of age, and of a most robust constitution. But he had in reality devoted his life to loyalty and his country.

[m] Stow; Survey of London: Aldgate Ward.

[n] Matt. Paris, A. D. 1239, 1245.

[o] Sandford, Book III, Chap. xiv.

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His son had engaged, during the father's absence in Spain, in the cabals of Thomas of Woodstock; but John of Gaunt had been at all times the firmest supporter of the throne. In fact, the crafty and cold-hearted Henry IV. was assiduous in propagating this fable in the sequel [p]; and was no doubt willing that it should be supposed to have the authority of his generous and noble-minded father.

Chaucer appointed clerk of the works.

Chaucer, as we have seen, was in the summer of 1389 appointed to the office of clerk of the works [q]. This was a situation which may be supposed to have been in many respects more congenial to his temper, than his former employment of comptroller of the customs. Its duties related to the erection, repair and embellishment of the king's mansions, parks and domains; and, among the documents to be found in our records, illustrating the life of Chaucer, one is a commission addressed to him of the date of twelfth of July 1390, for work to be done to St. George's chapel in the castle of Windsor [r]. He had the further advantage in this new appointment, of being entitled by precedent and patent to the assistance of a deputy, for whom a salary was provided by the crown; whereas, in his former office of comptroller of the customs, it had been usual, as has appeared, to require the principal to discharge his functions in person, and to keep the accounts of his place with his own hand. The salary of his present employment, as has been already mentioned [s], was two shillings *per diem*; making an annual income of thirty-six pounds ten shillings, and equivalent, in denominations of

Employed in repairing St. George's chapel at Windsor.

[p] Cotton, 1 Hen. 4. [q] Appendix, No. XIX. [r] Appendix, No. XX.
[s] Chap. XXXVI, p. 174.

modern money, to an income of six hundred and fifty-seven pounds. CHAP. LI.

Chaucer does not appear to have possessed the appointment of clerk of the works longer than about twenty months. My researches have not enabled me to find the patent conferring the office upon his successor; but, without this direct evidence, I have discovered documents sufficient very nearly to fix the length of time for which he occupied this situation. The name of the person who was clerk of the works in the fifteenth and sixteenth years of Richard II. is John Gedney; and I find a record of this person appointing a deputy, of the date of 16 September 1391[t]. In the rolls of the preceding year of Richard II, there is an instrument to the same purpose, by which Chaucer appoints a deputy, dated 22 January 1391[v]. It was therefore at some period in the interval between these dates that Chaucer retired to a private station. 1391. Resigns.

We have no information to guide us as to the cause of his retirement: and are therefore at liberty to conjecture, either that the office was taken from him that it might be given to some more useful and consummate courtier; or that, satiated with the hurry and turmoils of public life, he voluntarily determined, being now sixty-three years of age, to spend the short remainder of his life in the midst of that simplicity and solitude which he so ardently loved.

There is a tradition which represents him as passing Retires to Woodstock.

[t] Pat. 15 Ric. 2, p. 1, m. 24.

[v] Ditto, 14 Ric. 2, p. 2, m. 34.

CHAP. LI.

1391.

some of his last years at his house at Woodstock [a], which had been the favourite haunt of the most peaceful and prosperous period of his earlier existence; and this supposition seems on the whole to be the most probable. His Conclusions of the Astrolabie, which carries in the body of the work the date of 12 March 1391 [w], is, as he says, "sufficient for oure orizont, compowned after the latitude of Oxenforde [x]." From which words it seems to follow with some degree of evidence, that, as his son Lewis, to whom the performance is addressed, then resided at Oxford [y], so the work itself was written at no great distance from that city.

It may be observed, by the way, that the precise date which Chaucer has assigned to his Conclusions of the Astrolabie, leads to an additional presumption of the warmth and tenderness of his paternal affections. He retired from public life in the course of this year; we know that on the twenty-second of January he had not yet resigned his office of clerk of the works; he seems therefore to have used his first leisure in composing these few pages for the instruction of his youngest boy. We may figure him to ourselves as spending a short time with the "littel Lowys" on his journey from London, conversing with him respecting his studies, and then proceeding to Woodstock. Chaucer sat down in his rural habitation, perhaps the next morning, to compose this little manual of astro-

Visits his youngest son at Oxford.

Conclusions of the Astrolabie.

[a] Life, prefixed to Urry's Edition.

[w] p. 442, 443, Urry's Edition.

[x] Conclusions of the Astrolabie, Introduction.

[y] Vol. I, Chap. XVII, p. 382.

nomical rudiments, and dedicated the very first fruits of his privacy to the facilitating to this youth of ten years the acquisition of useful and ornamental knowledge. CHAP. LI. 1391.

Legende of Gode Women.

If we are correct in our conjecture, delivered in the last chapter, respecting the occasion on which Chaucer produced his Legende of Gode Women, it was probably written in the year 1390. It was a tribute of gratitude to the Good Queen Anne, who had obtained for him his liberty and the appointment of clerk of the works. This appointment he did not receive till July 1389: and the Legende will perhaps be confessed by a judicious reader to be too courtly a composition to be likely to have been written at a distance of sixty miles from London, by an old man who had renounced the cares, the ambition, and the artificial and interested forms, of the world. It is much more probable that it was composed within perhaps an hundred yards of the residence of majesty, the Old Palace of Westminster.

Sentiments of Chaucer at this period.

There is a striking contrast between the feelings with which Chaucer first entered into possession of his house at Woodstock, and those with which he now returned to it. It was given him by Edward III, and the scenery contiguous to it is alluded to in some of his earliest poems. It was here that he commenced the career of ambition. At an early age he was drawn from his academic retreats, or from the obscurity of a private station, and placed under the eye of royalty. He anticipated a gradation of affluence and dignity; and he was not disappointed. He watched the countenance of his sovereigns; he calculated the means of rising to fortune; and, if not a corrupt and a fawning courtier, we may at least believe that he was an

CHAP. LI. 1391. enlightened and an assiduous one. He mingled the thoughts of a man looking onward to fortune, with the vivacity of an unworn frame, and the sanguine hopes which almost universally characterise the union of inexperience and talent. He wandered in the country so as not to forget the town; and he enjoyed the sylvan and the silent scene with the temper of a poet, not that of a hermit.

He was not however long permitted to remain in retirement. He served in the armies of his country. He was employed in negotiations and embassies. Finally, he was fixed in the station of comptroller of the customs; an appointment which he occupied for twelve years, from the forty-sixth to the fifty-eighth year of his age, and in which he was daily busied with cockets and dockets, and surrounded with "hurry, bustle and confusion on our quays, and sugar-casks, beer-butts[a] and common-councilmen in our streets[a]." It was not till

> his labour all done was,
> And he 'd made all his reckenynges,
>
> HOUSE OF FAME, BOOK II, VER. 144.

that he was free to return to his private abode, and to court the muse. From the circumstance of our finding a single grant of the sovereign, indulging him with one month's

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[a] Ale, i. e. some liquor prepared from corn, and qualified with a vegetable bitter, was one of the most usual refreshments of the inhabitants of this island from the time of the Saxons, and is mentioned in their laws. See Wilkins, Leges Anglo-Saxonicæ, p. 273.

[a] West-Indian, Act. 1.

leave of absence on urgent affairs, we may infer that he was almost perpetually immersed in business, and was in danger of forgetting the fair face of nature. CHAP. LI. 1391.

At length, at the advanced age of sixty-three, he resigned his promotions, and bid an eternal adieu to courts and visits, to business and plans and superintendence and audiences. He thought it high time, having lived so much for the public and for fortune, to live a little for himself. He was desirous to expose himself no longer to the buffets and assaults of calamity. He had probably scarcely seen Woodstock for seventeen years. He began with refreshing his recollections, and revisiting his old acquaintances, the hills, and the streams and the vegetable shade. It is likely that he had planted trees with his own hands: they had grown so as almost to baffle his recollection; and that which he had last seen a twig, now demanded from him a sort of reverence, a vigorous and hardy tree. His house had scarcely been tenanted in his absence, and called forcibly for decoration and repair. Every thing reminded him of the silent and unnoticed progress of time.

But, if all that he saw was altered, a still greater alteration had taken place in his own breast. He had quitted Woodstock, scarcely more than thirty, a bold and ardent adventurer; he returned to it with more than thirty years experience of all that the world can offer, to interest and to gratify, to dazzle and to mislead. Public and literary honours had been showered upon him; adversity had assailed him with some of her fiercest attacks. He had left Woodstock, to force his way amidst the crowd of expectants; he returned, to rest. He had left Woodstock

CHAP. LI. with powers of the highest promise; he returned, qualified to produce——the Canterbury Tales.

1393. Canterbury Tales.

It is not difficult to fix with some degree of precision the period of his entering upon this work. In the Legende of Gode Women Chaucer appears to have enumerated all his considerable performances then existing, but without any mention of this, his most admirable production. The Legende could not have been written previously to the year 1382, the epoch of the marriage of Richard II. to Anne of Bohemia, to whom that work is addressed. It probably was not written till after the year 1389, when Chaucer had already obtained through her interposition his liberty, and the office of clerk of the works. In that case the Canterbury Tales could not have been begun sooner than the year 1390.

This is the principal argument which offers itself, enabling us to fix the chronology of this performance. That the name of Jack Straw [b] occurs in the tale of the Cock and the Fox, and that the death of Bernabo Visconti duke of Milan [c], which happened in 1385, makes one in the series of tragic events touched upon in that of the Monk, are indecisive circumstances. The Canterbury Tales was the work of years, and was never completed. The number intended seems to have been sixty; but in Mr. Tyrwhit's edition, whose reasonings upon the genuineness of the tales are entitled to our commendation, there are only twenty-four.

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[b] ver. 15400. See Tyrwhit, Discourse, note 6.

[c] ver. 14709. See Tyrwhit, ad loc.

There might have occurred in the collection allusions to the deposition of Richard II. and the accession of Henry IV; and this would have furnished no argument as to the period at which the work was undertaken. CHAP. LI. 1393.

Models after which they were formed.

Collections of tales were a favourite species of amusement in this age. On the revival of literature, when the very clements of ancient history were nearly forgotten, it was natural that the inquisitive should be desirous of possessing in a small compass an assemblage of some of its most memorable or interesting passages. This desire gave birth to the compilations of Simeon Seth, of Piers Alfonse, and the *Gesta Romanorum*[d]. These however, and the other collections whether of historical or fictitious narratives which succeeded them, consisted of parts wholly unconnected with each other. Boccaccio is understood to have been the first who endeavoured to reduce a compilation of this sort into a dramatical form, by putting his different tales into the mouths of imaginary persons, and assigning a particular event as exciting them to seek amusement in this way. His persons are individuals of some rank and education, who had withdrawn to a rural retreat, for the purpose of escaping the plague of Florence in 1348. Mr. Tyrwhit has truly observed[e], that the plan of Boccaccio, however it might be an improvement upon the writings of his predecessors, has, beside other disadvantages, that of being indefinite, the number of ten days, allotted for the retreat of the parties, being merely arbitrary; and that the characters of the personages are so little discriminated, as to

Il Decamerone.

[d] Vol. I, Chap. II, p. 15, 16.

[e] Discourse, note 2.

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1393.

De Confessione Amantis.

afford small scope for that variety and contrast which are essential to a composition approaching to the dramatical form.

The *De Confessione Amantis* of Gower is, like the principal production of Chaucer, a collection of tales; but whether he or Chaucer had the precedence in entering upon this species of undertaking has been considered as a matter of doubt. Gower is more careful than Chaucer in assigning the chronology of his work, and has mentioned the sixteenth year of Richard II. as the period of its publication. His performance contains no allusion to the Canterbury Tales, though it mentions their author with commendation; while Chaucer is supposed, with considerable appearance of reason, to have designed an attack upon Gower in his Prologue to the Man of Lawes Tale[f]. It is just therefore to assign the priority to the *De Confessione Amantis*. The plan of Gower's work is the confession of a lover to a priest of Venus, who addresses to him in return many exhortations and instructions, illustrated and inforced by a variety of narratives. This is certainly no improvement, in point of dramatic excellence, upon the outline of Boccaccio. Gower however, is entitled to the praise of having led the way to Chaucer in the idea of comprising a series of tales in a metrical volume. It surely is to be considered as no mean age either in literature or poetry, which produced, nearly at the same time, such poems as Gower's Florent and Apollynus of Tyre, and a collection of

[f] See Vol. I, Chap. XVII, p. 346. The allusion to Gower's *De Confessione Amantis* ought to have been stated by Mr. Tyrwhit as a feature of later chronology in the Canterbury Tales, than either Jack Straw's rebellion, or the death of Bernabo duke of Milan.

such various, and in many respects such exquisite, merit, as Chaucer's Canterbury Tales; not to mention the performance of Langland which has lately engaged our attention.

Breach between Chaucer and Gower.

From these circumstances then it appears that Chaucer had resided at least two years in his retirement at Woodstock before he began the Canterbury Tales. He was inflamed with emulation at reading the *De Confessione Amantis*. What was the cause of the misunderstanding which took place between him and Gower, it is difficult for us to discover. Gower was especially protected by Thomas of Woodstock; and Chaucer, as we have seen, suffered greatly from the animosity and persecutions of that nobleman. This however was not the express ground of their difference; for it was after this that Gower complimented Chaucer upon his Testament of Love. The compliment of Gower proves indeed the kindness of only one of the parties; it enables us however to infer the kindness of the other. The manner in which Gower mentions the Testament of Love is fortunately such as to evince that, in the sixteenth year of Richard II, the sketch only, and certain passages, of the work existed; and consequently that it had been communicated only to particular friends, of whom it follows that Gower at the time in which it was written was one. This is evident from the style of prospect and prophecy in which Venus is introduced by Gower, speaking of the work:

And grete well Chaucer—
[e] Forthy, nowe in his dayés old,

---

[e] Therefore.

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Thou shalt hym tellé this message,
That he, upon his latter age,
To sette an ende of all his werke
(As he whiche is myn owné clerke),
Do make his Testament of Love,
As thou hast done thy [h] Shryfte above.
Book VII, fol. 190, verso.

Gower visits Chaucer in prison.

But, though it may be inferred from this extract, that Gower and Chaucer were still friends when Chaucer was a prisoner, and that his illustrious brother-poet was one of Chaucer's visitors and confidential friends in his confinement, it does not follow that they were not now on the eve of the unhappy animosity which afterward took place between them. It would seem rather that Chaucer at first received the visits of his old friend with pleasure, and felt his spirits exhilarated with his kindness. Knowing his connection with the great man in power, he assiduously cultivated his intercourse, opened to him all his feelings, and communicated to him his first rude sketches of composition. But, when he saw that no alleviation to his misfortunes flowed from the professed attachment of Gower, that no termination to his confinement opened upon him, and that after a lapse of two years he was permitted to sell his pensions for bread, Chaucer then began to view his illustrious friend with distrust. It may be that Gower was blameless, and that Chaucer's obtaining no remission was imputable only to the rigid temper of Woodstock; but we cannot wonder that Chaucer was slow to enter into this idea. No absolute breach took place for the present be-

Chaucer suspects him of duplicity.

[h] Confession, *Confessio*.

tween the poets, but the idea of Gower as a specious and fair-spoken hypocrite took deep root in Chaucer's mind. CHAP. LI. 1393.

Is instigated by resentment to undertake the Canterbury Tales.

This being the state of things, it is obvious to conceive with what feelings Chaucer received Gower's capital work, the *De Confessione Amantis.* In another frame of mind he would have rejoiced in it, as an effort of generous emulation. But, poisoned as his feelings were toward Gower, he viewed it as a new act of animosity. Gower, who had hitherto written only in Latin and French, appeared in his eyes, not contented with treacherously betraying the man that loved him, as now taking up the pen in English with the base purpose of annihilating his literary fame. It seems therefore to have been resentment and indignation that first inspired Chaucer at an advanced age with the admirable project of his Canterbury Tales.

There is one remark which suggests itself upon this very probable history of the misunderstanding between Chaucer and Gower. If Chaucer conceived an unfavourable idea of his friend at the time when that friend's patron was all-powerful and he was himself a prisoner in the Tower, at least he did not then give vent to his suspicions and his resentment. Gower seems so little to have considered Chaucer as his enemy, as to have been induced several years afterward to introduce into his *De Confessione Amantis* a compliment to him, in a strain which would seem to us to imply the sincerest friendship. Chaucer however regarded the eulogium as a masked hostility; he was irritated to find the man, who, he thought, had deserted him in adversity, and was now desirous to rob him of his well-earned fame, putting on the semblance of attachment and kindness; and he resolved to show Gower that, if he were "in his dayés olde," and

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1393.

Anecdote of Shakespear.

"upon his latter age," yet he would not, in publishing his Testament of Love, "sette an ende of all his werke."

The breach between Chaucer and Gower has a resemblance to that between Shakespear and Jonson, two of the most eminent English geniuses of the sixteenth century. Jonson was a man of a morose and suspicious temper, and appears to have had frequent altercations with the players, of whom Shakespear was one, probably respecting the performance of his plays. Shakespear, who had had the opportunity of doing a very early kindness to his brother-bard, in procuring the representation of his first production, which had previously been rejected[i], and who appears afterward to have cultivated his friendship, seems at length to have taken up the quarrel of the performers. He is supposed to have had in his thoughts the corpulence and intemperance of Jonson in his Merry Wives of Windsor, and even to have borrowed in some degree the incident of the buck-basket in that play from a circumstance which really happened to his contemporary[j]. It is thus that

[i] Life of Shakespear by Rowe. Malone, Chronology of Shakespear's Plays, §. 18, decides that the piece in question was Every Man in his Humour.

[j] Steevens, Note upon the Merry Wives of Windsor, Act III, Scene iii, 1778. A friend has suggested to me, that this conjecture could not be true, on account of the irreconcilableness of the disgrace which Jonson is said to have sustained, to just chronology: the son of sir Walter Raleigh, whose tutor Jonson is represented to have been, and who is said to have put the trick upon him, not having been old enough at that time for the part he is made to sustain in the transaction. But to this it may be answered, that, if the name of the pupil be erroneous, that does not invalidate the whole story. Nothing is more usual in affairs of this sort, than a change of names, and the substitution of a celebrated person in the room of an obscure one. The authority upon which the incident rests is by no means contemptible; it is extracted by Oldys, an antiquarian of high character, from the note-book of Mr. Oldisworth secretary to Philip earl of Pembroke, who was nearly

Jonson expresses himself on the subject, in a copy of verses written after the exhibition of this comedy. CHAP. LI. 1393.

> Now, for the players, it is true, I tax'd them,
> And yet but some; and those so sparingly,
> As all the rest might have sat still, unquestion'd.
> ——— What th' have done 'gainst me
> I am not mov'd with. If it gave 'em meat,
> Or got 'em cloths, 'tis well: that was their end.
> Only amongst them, I am sorry for
> Some better natures, by the rest so drawn,
> To run in that vile line [k].

But, whatever were the original merits of this unhappy breach, it partook, in the sequel, of the usual fate of things of this nature, and, once made, was still aggravated with new hostilities. Jonson, in his Poetaster, his Bartholomew-Fair, and his Staple of News, written after their estrangement, has repeatedly attacked Shakespear; and Shakespear, on the other hand, who in his will bestows legacies upon many of his old connections, bequeaths no remembrance to Jonson. It was not till the great interpreter of nature was laid among the dead, that the generous feelings of the learned dramatist revived, and he did liberal justice to his competitor in his Discoveries, and in the Commendatory Verses prefixed to the folio edition of Shakespear's Works.

It is singular, and in some degree worthy of our reflection, that, in both these quarrels, that of Chaucer, and

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a contemporary of the parties. Add to which, the harmony of dates between the offence and the resentment; the play of the Merry Wives of Windsor being entered upon the Stationers' Books for January 1601, and the Poetaster having been first acted in the course of that year.

[k] Apology annexed to the Poetaster.

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1393.

that of Shakespear, it was the more excellent of the two parties, so far as the particulars of the misunderstandings can now be traced, that must be called the aggressor.

Canterbury Tales compared with the Orlando Furioso.

The Orlando Furioso of the greatest poet of modern Italy is, like Chaucer's principal work, a tissue of independent stories, artificially connected. It has greatly the advantage of the Canterbury Tales in point of language: the style being pure, unaffected, spirited and harmonious; and the Italian tongue having received perhaps no essential improvement since the time of Ariosto. This renders his admired production, in the strict sense of the term, a classic. But, whatever be the merit of the Italian poem either in ornament or execution, it falls far short of the English in the skilful adoption of a plan. Ariosto's independent heroes distract the attention, and painfully divide the interest; and his mode of successively breaking one story in the middle, to take up the thread of another, will always render the first reading of his work, which ought to be the most delightful, a species of task. And, as to the question of language, if a modern and polished speech have its advantage with the multitude of readers, an antiquated tongue, with its strong associations of memory, its venerable air, and an old-age affording it the charms of rareness and novelty, will always possess a peculiar interest with readers of the highest cultivation and taste.

Plan of the performance.

The Canterbury Tales, like those of Boccaccio, are connected by being put into the mouths of a number of imaginary relaters, who rehearse them in turn for their common amusement. But Chaucer has fortunately chosen a characteristic occasion for assembling his personages. A plague, like that of Florence in 1348, is a mere casualty, which might have occurred in almost any country or

any age; it has no relation to manners: while Chaucer's pilgrims, collected in the metropolis, and proceeding toward the shrine of St. Thomas of Becket, immediately carry us back, in their figure, their tempers, their pursuits and their sentiments, to the remoter period in which the work was written. The personages also of the English poet are skilfully varied; they are not mere gentlemen and ladies, like those of the Decamerone. His thirty pilgrims are a medley of persons such as we should naturally suppose collected together for the object they have in view, and who had probably for their principle of association no other motive, than that, by being thus formed into a caravan, they might be more secure against that species of attack so much to be apprehended in rude and unsettled times. Chaucer, having drawn his persons from so various classes of society, has presented us with a very copious picture of the manners then prevailing in England; and, as some of them are honourable, proud or severe, and others prone to broad humour and buffoonery, he is furnished with a natural opportunity for exhibiting a great variety of talent. His knight entertains us with a splendid tale of chivalry; his monk takes occasion to display his various reading; his prioresse is superstitious; his persone moral; and his man of lawe and his doctour of physike grave, specious and demure. If he is inclined to relieve the monotony of his performance by introducing tales of a broader vein, he is not obliged, like Boccaccio, against every principle of the dramatic art, to put them into the mouths of the sober and the decent, but has at hand his miller, his reve and his shipman, from whom we should naturally expect discourse of a rougher cast.

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1394.
Chaucer again obtains a pension.

A painful incident arises in this part of the story. Chaucer had not been more than twelve months engaged in composing his Canterbury Tales, when he found it necessary to apply to the crown for some increase to his resources; a sure proof that, whatever other benefits he might have derived from his public employments, he had not made them the means of accumulating an independent fortune. It is probable, considering the veneration in which learning and talents were at this time held, and recollecting the temper and conduct of Petrarca and Chaucer's other literary contemporaries on the continent, that the English poet also rather claimed this provision as his due, than sued for it in the tone of a suppliant. If we could find a petition presented by him on this occasion, it is likely that we should see him describing the long and faithful services he had rendered to the crown, his unmerited misfortunes, his advanced age, and the gigantic undertaking in which, in spite of both, he was now engaged, and respecting which he perhaps, soberly, not arrogantly, expressed a hope, that it might do credit to the patronage of his king, and place the literature of his country upon a level with that of the most fortunate of the surrounding nations. The result was that the king granted him, on the last day of February 1394, a pension of twenty (in modern money three hundred and sixty) pounds *per annum* for the remainder of his life[1].

[1] Appendix, No. XXI.

CHAP. LII.

MARRIAGE OF JOHN OF GAUNT WITH CATHERINE SWINFORD.—CHAUCER REMOVES TO DONNINGTON.—REENGAGED IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS.—OBTAINS A PATENT OF PROTECTION.—RECEIVES A GRANT OF WINE.

CHAP. LII.

Evidences that Chaucer resided at Donnington.

THERE is another spot of English ground, beside Woodstock, which has been consecrated to readers of taste and imagination, by a traditionary connection with the name of Chaucer. This is Donnington-Castle near Newbury in the county of Berks. That the argument in support of this connection may be placed in its true light, we will review the authorities upon which it rests, in chronological order.

Leland.

The oldest of our English antiquaries is Leland, who wrote in the reign of Henry VIII. Though in his account of the life of Chaucer he does not mention Donnington, he may fairly be considered as referring jointly to Woodstock and to this place, when he says that " there are certain reasons which incline him to believe that the

CHAP. LII. poet was a native either of the county of Oxford, or of that of Berks [a]."

Camden.

Camden is a writer of the reign of Elizabeth. Speaking of Donnington, he says, "It is a small but elegant castle, situated upon the brow of a well-wooded hill, having an agreeable prospect, and being very light with windows on all sides. It is said to have been built by sir Richard Adderbury [Abberbury] knight, who likewise founded beneath it an hospital for the poor, called a God's House: it was afterward a dwelling of Chaucer, and then of the De la Poles; and in our fathers' memory came into the hands of Charles Brandon duke of Suffolk [b]."

Speght.

Speght, a contemporary of Camden, but who wrote after him, quotes the above passage in part, and then adds, "Donnington Castle standeth in a parke in Barkshire not far from Newbery, where to this day standeth an olde oke called Chaucers Oke [c]."

Evelyn.

Evelyn, the author of a work of considerable reputation, called Sylva, or a Discourse of Forest-Trees, published in the year 1664, has the following interesting detail, in that part of his work which relates to the oak. "Nor are we to over-pass those memorable trees which so lately flourished in Dennington Park neer Newberry: amongst which three were most remarkable from the ingenious planter, and dedicator (if tradition hold), the famous English bard, Jeofry Chaucer, of which one was called the Kings, another the Queens, and a third Chaucers-Oak.

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[a] Scriptores Britannici, Cap. DV.

[b] Britannia: Attrebatii, Barkshire.

[c] Speght, Life of Chaucer: his children.

The first of these was fifty foot in height before any bough or knot appeared, and cut five foot square at the butt end, all clear timber. The Queens was felled since the wars, and held forty foot excellent timber, straight as an arrow in growth and grain, and cutting four foot at the stub, and neer a yard at the top; besides a fork of almost ten foot clear timber above the shaft, which was crowned with a shady tuft of boughs, amongst which, some were on each side curved like rams-horns, as if they had been so industriously bent by hand. This oak was of a kind so excellent, cutting a grain clear as any clap-board [d] (as appeared in the wainscot which was made thereof), that a thousand pities it is some seminary of the acorns had not been propagated, to preserve the species. Chaucers Oak, though it were not of these dimensions, yet was it a very goodly tree [e]."

Ashmole.

Ashmole, an antiquary of the same age with the author last quoted, says of Donnington-Castle, that it "was erected by sir Richard de Adderbury; and, in process of time, became the seat of sir Geoffry Chaucer, the prince of English poetry, who composed many of his celebrated pieces under an oak in the park [f]."

Life prefixed to Urry's Edition of Chaucer.

The author of the Life of Chaucer, prefixed to Urry's edition of his works, repeats the information of Camden, Evelyn and Ashmole, and then adds, "In this pleasant retirement Chaucer spent the few last years of his life, living in honour, and esteemed by all, famous for his learning, not only in England, but in foreign countries."

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[d] The wood which is used for constructing casks, so called.

[e] Chap. XXIX, §. 12.

[f] Antiquities of Berkshire, Vol. II.

CHAP. LII.

Grose.

Lastly, Mr. Grose, the author of the Antiquities of England and Wales[g], collected in the present reign, has added to our information these circumstances; that Donnington was purchased by "Walter Abberbury from Edward II. for one hundred shillings; that sir Richard Abberbury obtained a licence to rebuild the castle towards the latter part of the reign of Richard II; that Chaucer purchased it of the son of sir Richard; and that he retired hither about the year 1397." In the beginning of this enumeration Mr. Grose quotes a manuscript in the Cotton library as his authority; but, as he has failed to specify the manuscript, or to mention how many of his facts are drawn from it, it is impossible for us exactly to decide what degree of credit is due to his statement.

Objections.

On the whole, we should conceive there to be a chain of evidence in the above detail, such as might well authorise a fixed opinion that Chaucer actually inhabited the castle at Donnington. There are however some particulars, which to a certain degree weaken this evidence.

from records concerning the former proprietor.

Mr. Grose mentions that sir Richard Abberbury obtained a licence to rebuild the castle toward the latter part of the reign of Richard II[h]. What faith ought to be given to this assertion I am unable to pronounce. There is however a patent from that prince to sir Richard, dated 26 April 1393, permitting him to build and endow the hospital already mentioned[i]. He also founded in the same year,

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[g] Vol. I.

[h] Leland also represents sir R. Abberbury as the founder of the castle of Donnington. Itinerary, Vol. III, fol. 96.

[i] Monasticon Anglicanum, Vol. II, p. 174.

and near the same spot, a monastery of Trinitarian Friars[k]. We do not know when the founder of these establishments died: but their erection, or, still more, the rebuilding of the castle, are not circumstances which we should expect immediately to precede the alienation of the domain. Mr. Tyrwhit[l] is the first person who has applied the patent of 1393 to the illustration of the life of Chaucer. It was therefore perhaps from some other and distinct consideration that the writer of the life in Urry's edition and Mr. Grose were induced to consider Chaucer as spending only the few last years of his life in this retirement.

and from Chaucer's pecuniary circumstances.

The circumstances of Chaucer himself might also be considered as rendering it somewhat improbable that he made such an acquisition toward the close of his life. Many arguments forbid us to believe that he retired from public life with an opulent fortune. While a prisoner in the Tower, he complains that his "worldly godes were fulliche dispente." In 1391 he ceased to be a placeman. In 1394 he obtained a new pension of twenty pounds *per annum*; a strong presumption that he was not at this period much at ease in his fortune.

Chaucer did not plant the oaks at Donnington.

Mr. Grose has justly remarked that, if Chaucer purchased Donnington in 1397, he could not have "studied under an oak of his own planting in that place." This however affords no material objection to the notion of his having possessed the estate. The circumstances related by Evelyn respecting the oaks, clearly prove that they did not

[k] Tanner, Notitia Monastica: Berkshire, VII, 1.

[l] Preface, Appendix C, note l.

CHAP. LII. receive their names, till their character and dimensions were determined. Chaucer, though a poet, we may believe was not enough of a prophet to enable him in the acorn to pay so courtly a compliment, and to contrive that the King's Oak should be larger than the Queen's, and the Queen's larger than his own. He found them on the estate, and gave them such names as pleased him. This too best agrees with the scientific remark of Evelyn [m], that the time from Chaucer to the civil wars of Charles I. seems too short for the oaks to have attained the dimensions he describes. Add to which, Speght, in the reign of Elizabeth, says that Chaucer's Oak was at that time an old tree.

Inference. In conclusion, the chain of direct evidence seems too strong to be overthrown by such presumptions, from the building of sir Richard Abberbury, or the circumstances of Chaucer, as have been opposed to it. We may therefore on the whole indulge our veneration for Donnington Castle, and walk among its ruins tracing the footsteps of the poet, without danger of subjecting ourselves to the empire of a delusion.

The little narrative of Evelyn, taken in this point of view, is exceedingly agreeable. We rejoice to find that the oaks which Chaucer loved, and upon which he bestowed names, were among the most admirable of their species. The wainscot with a "grain as clear as any clap-board," that was made from them, was pleasing to our ancestors to view, and may be pleasing to us to

[m] ubi supra.

remember. The man of taste, as well as the naturalist, will join with Evelyn, in wishing that a "seminary of these acorns had been propagated." The story too illustrates the character of Chaucer, and coincides with every thing we know of the excellence of his disposition. When he retired from courts and cities, it was not in the temper of a misanthrope. When he reclined at seventy years of age under the shadow of his own oaks, he still called to mind with delight the kind and honourable interposition of the queen [n] in his behalf, and the placability of his sovereign. It follows that he was happy, and descended into the vale of years with cheerful feelings, and a mind that willingly called back to recollection past scenes and the connections in which he had formerly been placed.

1394. Death of Constance, second duchess of Lancaster.

The coincidence is worthy of our attention between Chaucer's acquisition of Donnington, and the third marriage of his patron, the duke of Aquitaine. In July 1394 the Spanish consort of John of Gaunt departed this life [o]. We have already seen that this prince had been now for nearly twenty years on terms of the most intimate connection with Catherine lady Swinford, the sister of Chaucer's wife. This lady had borne him three sons, afterward known by the titles of the earl of Somerset, cardinal

[n] The queen to whom this oak was dedicated was probably Anne of Bohemia, who died on the seventh of June 1394, (Walsingham, ad ann.), but who left behind her a character inexpressibly dear both to the king and the nation: Chaucer may be supposed to have consecrated this tree to her memory. Richard II. was again contracted in marriage, October 1396, to Isabella, daughter of Charles VI. king of France, who was at that time in the eighth year of her age.

[o] Walsingham and Knighton, ad ann.

CHAP. LII. 1394. Beaufort, and the duke of Exeter; from the eldest of whom were lineally descended the princes of the house of Tudor, and all the sovereigns who from the close of the fifteenth century have swayed the sceptre of England.

1396. John of Gaunt marries the sister of Chaucer's wife.

John of Gaunt, whose mind was instinct with the domestic and social affections, had nothing now more nearly at heart, than the desire of making a respectable establishment, and providing in the most effectual manner, for this doubtful branch of his personal relations. A familiarity of twenty years had not abated his esteem and affection for the mother; and the children, who afterward made a considerable figure in the history of their country, may be supposed to have daily unfolded more of those qualities which might give them a strong and irresistible claim upon their father's providence and care. Accordingly, in January 1396, he publicly espoused Catherine Swinford the mother [p]; and in the following year obtained an act of parliament legitimating by name the children she had borne him previously to this solemnity [q]. In the same year John, the eldest, was created earl of Somerset [r], and in the next Henry, the second, was elected bishop of Lincoln [s].

1397.

Favours bestowed by him upon the family of Chaucer.

Having thus paid the homage he thought due to the woman to whom he had so long been attached, and laid a foundation for the splendid fortune of her offspring, the

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[p] Stow and Collins, ad ann. [q] Cotton, 20 R. 2. Parl. History, ad ann.

[r] Ditto. From the Parliamentary History it appears, that the earl of Somerset received at the same time a pension of £. 20 *per annum*, as the appendage of his title.

[s] Godwin: Episc. Lincoln. cap. xix.

1397.

duke of Aquitaine looked a little further. He had taken to wife a person of a rank inferior to his own, and he now resolved, with that magnificence of proceeding which was congenial to his habits, that no one who was related to her should be left in a situation which might be thought disproportioned to the alliance she had contracted. Of the history of Thomas Swinford, her only son by her former husband, nothing is known. Probably the only other relations she had in England were the family of Chaucer. To them therefore John of Gaunt, who had so long patronised the poet, resolved still further to extend his protection and munificence. The brother-in-law of Catherine Swinford, though he had passed through several public employments, was still, it may be, according to the ideas of the times, a plebeian. The duke of Aquitaine determined, in the feudal sense, to ennoble him; that is, to make him the proprietor of a domain which should constitute him a tenant in chief of the crown. For this purpose he purchased and bestowed upon Chaucer the estate of Donnington Castle. Nor was this a gift unworthy of the first prince of the blood to bestow upon a person so nearly allied to him. The mansion had lately been rebuilt, was elegant, cheerful, and agreeably situated. It was afterward reckoned among the more considerable possessions of the De la Poles dukes of Suffolk, and in the sequel was thought worthy to be bestowed by Henry VIII. as a residence for his brother-in-law. The coincidence of time renders it highly probable that this was the mode in which Chaucer came into possession of Donnington. Mr. Grose says that "he retired hither about 1397," the very year in which the children of John of Gaunt by

CHAP. LII. Catherine Swinford were legitimated; and several circumstances, already mentioned, show that Mr. Grose's date is nearly right.

1397.

Other particulars may be added, strongly tending to confirm this hypothesis. On the twentieth of March 1399, a few weeks after the death of John of Gaunt, Richard II. granted to Thomas Chaucer a pension for life, in lieu of certain offices which had been bestowed upon him by the deceased prince, but which Richard had now transferred to his favourite minister, the earl of Wiltshire [t]. This grant was confirmed by Henry IV. on his accession [u]; who also bestowed upon Thomas Chaucer the offices of constable of Wallingford Castle [u], sheriff of Oxfordshire for life [x], and chief butler to the houshold [y]. It can therefore scarcely be doubted that the duke of Aquitaine acted on the principle of making the fortune of his wife's relations, and that Henry IV, his eldest son, prosecuted the same plan. It is in the second year of this prince that we find Thomas

[t] This grant is recited, Pat. 1 Hen. 4, p. 1, m. 10.

[u] Pat. 1 Hen. 4, ut supra. [x] Records, apud Speght.

[y] The author of the Life of Chaucer prefixed to Urry's Edition, represents Thomas Chaucer as having been first appointed to the office of chief butler in the twenty-second year of Richard II. I believe this is not true; though I have not thought it a question of sufficient importance, to require the looking through the patents of successive years to ascertain when he first obtained the office. The *Calendarium Rotulorum Patentium*, lately published by authority of parliament (a most imperfect and wretched performance), ascribes it to the fourth year of Henry IV; and I find one John Payn (Pat. 1 Hen. 4, p. 1, m. 27) nominated to this employment on the thirtieth of September 1399, that is, on the very day of the accession of that monarch. It is not probable that, if Richard had bestowed the employment upon Thomas Chaucer, Henry would have made it one of the first acts of his reign to deprive him of it.

Chaucer first elected to the office of speaker of the house of commons. His talents, we may suppose, perfectly qualified him for this situation; but it seems nearly certain that he was originally indebted for it to this marriage, by which he was brought into so near an alliance to the race of his sovereigns. CHAP. LII. 1397.

1398. Chaucer receives a patent of protection fiom the crown.

One of the most curious particulars in the concluding part of the history of the life of Chaucer is a patent of protection granted him by Richard II, of the date of the twelfth of May 1398[a]. It has been supposed that this grant was made in reference to some embarrassment in the circumstances of the poet. There is however nothing in the terms of the patent, which necessarily leads to this construction. It is stated in the preamble that the king had ordained Chaucer to perform and expedite many arduous and urgent affairs of the crown, as well in presence as absence of the king, in various parts of the kingdom. The instrument then goes on to state Chaucer as apprehensive lest, in discharging the employments which the king has been pleased to impose upon him, he should be interrupted, molested, or impleaded, by certain persons, not named in the instrument, his competitors, by means of various quarrels and factions which they might excite against him. The king, in consequence of Chaucer's representations in this point, has thought proper to take him, his servants, lands, goods, rents, and property of every description, under his protection; and by this patent requires his bailiffs and faithful subjects to maintain, protect

[a] Appendix, No. XXII.

CHAP. LII. 1398.

and defend Chaucer, his servants, estates and effects, from all arrests and prosecutions, pleas of the crown only excepted, for the term of two years from the date of this patent.

The real meaning of this deed must now perhaps remain a mystery for ever. From certain phrases which occur in it we might be inclined to regard it, as it has hitherto been regarded by the editors of his works, as a protection from his creditors. There are however various clauses and terms which do not seem, at least to a reader of the present day, such as it was natural to employ in an affair of that sort. It does not appear why his creditors should have excited quarrels and factions [*querelas sive sectas*] against him, nor should we expect his butcher and his baker to be styled in a public deed his competitors [*æmulos suos*]. In a word we are destitute of documents to enable us to ascertain, either what were the many arduous and urgent affairs of the crown in which Chaucer was at this time employed, or what the perplexing and vexatious circumstances that made it important to him to obtain for two years an exemption from all arrests and prosecutions.

Chaucer again engaged in public affairs.

Thus much however, if any faith is to be given to the plain meaning and construction of words in a deed of this sort, is certain, that Chaucer, after seven years retirement; and being at this time seventy years of age, was now once more engaged in public life. What was the nature of the affairs in which he was employed it seems impossible to discover; but it must have been no trivial concern that could authorise the description of " a great variety of arduous and urgent political transactions, to be performed and expedited by Chaucer, as well in presence as absence

of the king, in various parts of the realm;" or that should have made it probable, supposing these phrases to relate rather to the affairs in question than to Chaucer's private situation, that he would, on their account, "be disquieted, molested or impleaded, by certain persons his competitors, and vexed with suits, complaints and hostility." CHAP. LII. 1398.

The true construction therefore of this grant of protection seems to be in a great degree opposite to the sense in which it has hitherto been understood, and to imply rather the present eminence of Chaucer, than that he was now obscured or obliged to conceal himself. The "many arduous and urgent affairs in which the king at this time employed him," show that he was now of too much importance, or in too great a degree of favour at court, to allow him, even at seventy years of age, to enjoy his privacy in the county of Berks. His being thus called back into public life, as well as the elegant and perhaps splendid retreat of which he could call himself master, was probably the immediate consequence of the marriage which the duke of Aquitaine had contracted with his kinswoman. We may suppose it to have been partly owing to Chaucer's being thus reengaged in public business, and partly it may be to his removal to a new residence and mode of life on the event of John of Gaunt's marriage, that the Canterbury Tales were left in the imperfect and unfinished state in which we have received them [a].

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[a] It ought to be observed that the house is supposed still to exist, or an inn built upon the site of it, from which the personages of the Canterbury Tales set out upon their pilgrimage. The sign has been converted, by a confusion of speech, from the Tabard, "a slevelesse coate worne in times past by noblemen in the

CHAP. LII.

1398.

Obtains a grant of wine.

It was perhaps to reward Chaucer for the assiduity with which he discharged the business here referred to, that he received, in the autumn of the same year, a grant of a tun of wine yearly, to be delivered to him by the king's chief butler, in the port of London[b]. Two remarks suggest themselves on comparing this grant of wine with the grant of a similar nature which Chaucer received in the late reign. In the first place, the present amounted in value to scarcely more than half as much as the grant bestowed upon him at the time that his patron, John of Gaunt, had the supreme direction of affairs: three hundred and sixty-five *pychers*, or gallons, the amount of the grant of 1374, being nearly equivalent to four pipes, or two tuns[c]. Secondly, the wine of 1374 was appointed to be delivered daily to Chaucer in the port of London, but the wine given in the present grant was to be delivered annually only, in the month of December. As therefore the inference is strong in the former instance that Chaucer resided in London, so it is probable, considering the two grants together, that the latter was constructed, in the contemplation at least of his future residence at some distance from the metropolis. Chaucer had perhaps by this time concluded the business, whatever it was, to which his patent of protection refers.

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warres, but now onely by Heraults (see Speght, Glossary, in voc.)," into the Talbot, a species of hound; and the following inscription is to be found on the spot: "*This is the inn, where Geoffrey Chaucer and nine-and-twenty pilgrims lodged on their journey to Canterbury, in* 1383." The inscription is truly observed by Mr. Tyrwhit to be modern, and of little authority: Discourse, note 6.

[b] Appendix, No. XXIII.

[c] See Chap. XXXVI, p. 166.

CHAP. LIII.

ASSASSINATION OF THOMAS OF WOODSTOCK.—BANISHMENT OF HENRY OF BOLINGBROKE.—DEATH OF JOHN OF GAUNT.—DEPOSITION OF RICHARD II.—BEHAVIOUR OF CHAUCER ON THAT EVENT.—FAVOURED BY THE NEW SOVEREIGN.—REMOVES TO LONDON.

THE government of Richard II. had been conducted on the whole with considerable mildness and temper, from the period of his resuming the royal authority in May 1389. It however gained no accession of stability; the personal character of the king was weak, fickle, effeminate and indolent; and his time was principally spent in low excesses and prodigal debauchery. His chief rival and most dangerous competitor at this time, Thomas of Woodstock, was of a disposition more congenial than that of Richard to the times in which he lived, rough, boisterous and enterprising, animated with a boundless ambition, and rich in plans and talents for the gratification of this passion. About the time of the third marriage of John of Gaunt, Richard also formed a contract of marriage with Isabella,

CHAP. LIII.

1396.

Second marriage of Richard II.

CHAP. LIII. daughter to the king of France, then seven years of age; and one of the conditions of the contract was a truce of thirty years between the two countries[a]. No measure could be more laudable; England had long been vexed with inglorious and indecisive hostilities; but Woodstock, who saw himself excluded from all share in the government, gladly took occasion from this circumstance, to harangue on all occasions respecting the glories of Edward III. and the Black Prince, and the imbecility of their descendant; and to form a party against the crown[b].

1396. Truce for thirty years.

1397. Conspiracy of Thomas of Woodstock.

What was the extent of the projects of Thomas of Woodstock it is difficult to decide. The archbishop of Canterbury, his brother the earl of Arundel, and Beauchamp earl of Warwick, were embarked in the conspiracy. Richard however had such intelligence as to enable him to forestal their proceedings; and they and their confederates were surprised and taken into custody[c]. A parliament was summoned to determine upon their fate; and the duke of Aquitaine, who as hereditary great steward of England presided at their trials, by so doing gave a sanction to the proceedings of government. The archbishop, who was first arraigned, in consideration of his station received sentence only of perpetual banishment; the earl of Arundel, who demeaned himself on his trial with an undaunted firmness, was dragged immediately from Westminster Hall to Tower Hill, and there executed; and the earl of Warwick, by expressing great humiliation and penitence, succeeded to

Punishment of conspirators. September.

[a] Rymer, Tom. VII, 19 Ric. 2, Mar. 11. [b] Froissart, Vol. IV, Chap. lxxxvi.
[c] Rymer, Tom. VIII, 21 Ric. 2, Jul. 15.

have his sentence commuted from death to perpetual imprisonment [d]. All the offenders, agreeably to the irregular and lawless spirit of the times, were arraigned, not for the new conspiracy, which could alone justify their punishment, but for the share they had taken in the usurpation of 1386; a guilt which length of time, as well as repeated pardons from the crown, might have seemed to have obliterated. In fact, men were little studious, in this age, of the formalities of legal proceedings, and adverted little to the danger of their violences being drawn into a precedent. It was enough for them, that the crime of the accused was regarded as publicly notorious, and that the proceedings by which they were cut off, were solemn and in the face of day.

Assassination of their leader.

But a worse proceeding remained behind. The king's uncle, the leader of the conspiracy, was not brought to trial with the rest. He was too much a favourite with the nation; and government did not venture to arraign and execute him in the metropolis of his country. It was recollected that the beheading of Thomas earl of Lancaster, first prince of the blood, had been the signal for the deposition of Edward II, though he had been taken in arms against his sovereign. Richard however adopted a way perhaps still more dangerous. Immediately after the arrest of Thomas of Woodstock, he had transported him to Calais; and, an order being now issued to the governor of that fortress to bring him to London to trial, the answer returned was that he had suddenly died in custody [e]. It may be believed

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[d] Cotton, 21 Ric. 2. Parl. Hist. ad ann.

[e] Cotton, and Parl. History, ubi supra.

CHAP. LIII. 1397. that John of Gaunt, who had given his countenance to the public proceedings against the conspirators, was by no means privy of this: the younger, the more precipitate, and more confidential counsellors of Richard, must have been those who advised him to a measure, which soon after terminated in his destruction.

1398. Quarrel between Henry of Bolingbroke and Thomas Mowbray duke of Norfolk. January.

A government, which has recourse to assassination as its means of defence, forfeits all its peculiar advantages, and is the great adversary of its own stability. In these turbulent times in particular, the leading nobility of England felt that this was a precedent peculiarly perilous to themselves. They were originally little disposed to submit to the curb of authority; and the new situation which was thus created, rendered them still more furious and ungovernable. The parliament which had been summoned at Westminster for the trial of Woodstock and his confederates, was adjourned after a session of twelve days, and met again at Shrewsbury in the commencement of the following year. Here a fierce and public quarrel broke out between Henry of Bolingbroke eldest son to John of Gaunt, and Thomas Mowbray duke of Norfolk, the lineal descendant and representative of Thomas of Brotherton younger son to Edward I, to whom, as governor of Calais, the custody of Thomas of Woodstock had been committed; each charging the other with the most treasonable designs [f].

There is great obscurity in the whole of this story. It is almost impossible to guess at the motives of the contending parties, or to form any tolerable solution respecting

[f] Cotton, and Parl. History, ubi supra. Froissart, Chap. xcii.

the strange proceeding by which Richard thought proper to terminate the affair. In the Parliament Rolls, Bolingbroke is represented as the accuser, charging Mowbray with having sounded him respecting some project of sedition, with complaining of the tyrannical and sanguinary proceedings against the associates of Woodstock, and with assenting that no one could be confident of his safety under such a government as the present. Froissart, who appears to speak from minute information, reverses all this, makes Mowbray the accuser, and Bolingbroke the party charged with disaffection. In comparing these authorities, the records have undoubtedly the highest claim to belief, unless we could suppose that, in the lawless revolution which followed, even they were vitiated by the unscrupulous craft of the usurper. Add to which, it is sufficiently singular, that the exact words which the Parliament Rolls put into the mouth of Bolingbroke, Froissart puts into that of Mowbray; a coincidence which we should scarcely have expected, if his narrative had been founded upon rumour only.

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1398.

It is somewhat improbable, whichever way we take it, that any such private conversation, as we find each of these parties ready to lay to the charge of the other, ever took place. Mowbray was implicated in the reproach of the murder of Thomas of Woodstock: it is therefore very unlikely that he should have opened his lips to the nephew and brother-in-law[a] of Woodstock, in the way of complaint

[a] Henry of Bolingbroke and Thomas of Woodstock had married sisters, coheiresses of the family of Bohun, earls of Hereford.

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1398.

on that subject; nor is it a whit more probable that Bolingbroke would have selected him for his confident.

Let us suppose then that the accusation, from whichever party it came, was altogether a forgery. Mowbray was a confidential minister and trusted agent of Richard II.; Bolingbroke might be desirous of effecting his death or banishment: yet, judging according to our notions, a solemn public duel would seem a very inartificial method for accomplishing that purpose. There is somewhat more probability that the accusation and defiance should have come from Mowbray, who had more to fear from Bolingbroke than Bolingbroke could fear from him, and who, as possessing the royal ear, might suppose that he could turn the sequel of the transaction in any way he pleased. —It was determined at Shrewsbury by the royal authority, that the truth of the accusation should be tried by duel, and Coventry was the place ultimately fixed upon for the decision.

Lists at Coventry. September.

Nothing could be more fatal in its consequences than the conduct adopted by Richard in the sequel of this business. An immense assembly met at Coventry pursuant to the royal appointment. The lists being set, and the combatants prepared, the king suddenly interfered, and commanded them to desist; then pronouncing against Mowbray a sentence of banishment for life, and against Bolingbroke for ten years[h]. This decision is said to have been sanctioned by a committee of twelve peers and six commoners to whom the parliament of Shrewsbury had delegated its

Both the combatants ordered into banishment.

[h] Cotton, and Parl. History, ubi supra.

authority, probably for the termination of this very affair, and of which the duke of Aquitaine was one. Bolingbroke however, who appears to have conceived a deep resentment for the murder of Thomas of Woodstock, was driven by this measure to inexpiable hatred. Yet, with the smoothness and plausibility which belonged to his character, he exhibited such marks of submission in their parting interview, that Richard was softened, and took that occasion to remit to him four, of the ten, years of his exile[i].

CHAP. LIII. 1398.

The last support of the tottering throne of Richard II. was taken away by the death of John of Gaunt in the beginning of the following year[j].

1399. Death of John of Gaunt. February 3.

The spleen of the church, which pursued this prince through life, followed him even in death, and gave birth to a malicious story respecting the cause of his decease, which has lately been revived by the sinister and ill-omened industry of certain naturalists and antiquarians[k]. A doctor of the church, by name Thomas Gascoigne, has left a document on this subject in which he thus expresses himself[l]. "*Novi ego, magister Thomas Gascoigne, licet indignus, sacræ theologiæ doctor, qui hæc scripsi et collegi, diversos viros, qui mortui fuerunt ex putrefactione membrorum suorum genitalium et corporis sui; quæ corruptio et putrefactio, ut ipsi dixerunt,*

Supposed particulars of this event.

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[i] Cotton, Parl. History, and Froissart, ubi supra.

[j] Walsingham and Otterbourne, ad ann.

[k] Philosophical Transactions, Vol. XXXI, No. 365, Art. 2, anno 1720. Andrews, History of Great Britain, Vol. I.

[l] Dictionarium Theologicum, apud MSS. in Linc. Coll. Oxon. quoted in the above.

CHAP. LIII. *causata fuit per exercitium copulæ carnalis cum mulieribus. Magnus enim dux in Anglia, scilicet J. de* Gaunt, *mortuus est ex tali putrefactione membrorum genitalium et corporis sui, causata per frequentationem mulierum. Magnus enim fornicator fuit, ut in toto regno Angliæ divulgabatur; et ante mortem suam, jacens sic infirmus in lecto, eandem putrefactionem regi Angliæ, Ricardo Secundo, ostendit, cum idem rex eundem ducem in sua infirmitate visitavit; et dixit mihi qui ista novit, unus fidelis sacræ theologiæ baccalaureus.*" This curious story has been ingeniously employed to vindicate the discoverers of America from the charge of introducing into Europe the most venomous of diseases.

1399.

Refuted.

To judge of the credibility of this statement it is necessary we should consider by whom, and under what circumstances, it was made. The author was a distinguished member of the university of Oxford in the middle of the fifteenth century, having died in the year 1457, and having twice filled the office of chancellor there[m]. This was the period in which the most strenuous exertions were made for the suppression of the doctrines of Wicliffe; and Gascoigne was among the most zealous in these exertions. Oxford, as we have already seen[n], had during the life of this reformer been deeply infected with the taint of heresy, and even many years after his death was still the favourite resort of his followers[o]. In the year 1406 a testimonial was drawn up, in favour of the character,

[m] Wood, Antiq. Oxon., Coll. Orielense, Scriptores.

[n] Chap. XLVI, p. 374.

[o] Wood, A. D. 1411.

learning, and piety of Wicliffe, in the name of the chancellor, and congregation of masters of the university [p]. Some degree of artifice and management might perhaps have been employed in procuring the testimonial; though this supposition seems by no means necessary, considering the bias under which Oxford is acknowledged to have laboured at that time. Its genuineness, at least, cannot, as it should seem, be disputed, since the university, in its letter to the council of Constance, produced there for the purpose of exculpating its members from the discredit attendant upon such a document, do not pretend to disclaim it [q]. Dr. Gascoigne however, who was anxious to wash out every stain of heresy from his *alma mater*, does not hesitate at this; and, in the work in which he has given the above tale of John of Gaunt, speaking of this transaction, says, "Peter Payne, an heretic, stole the common seal of the university, under which he wrote to the heretics at Prague in Bohemia, that Oxford and all England were of the same belief with those of Prague, except the false friars mendicant [r]." This story of the forgery of Wicliffe's testimonial, being once confidently affirmed, has, agreeably to the mode in which history is usually written, been repeated by almost every grave historian from Dr. Gascoigne to the present times.

John of Gaunt was scarcely less obnoxious to the suppressors of heretical pravity than Wicliffe himself. It is

[p] Wood, ad ann.

[q] L'Enfant, Histoire du Concile de Constance, Liv. III, Chap. xi.

[r] Dictionarium Theologicum; apud Wood, A.D. 1406, note d.

CHAP. LIII. 1399. well known that the circumstances attending the last moments of heretics and infidels have ever formed a favourite topic to their more fortunate and immaculate opposers. Precisely in this spirit, Walsingham has affirmed Wicliffe to have been struck by the judgment of God with the palsy of which he died, "on the anniversary of the martyrdom of Thomas of Becket, just as he was about to utter from his pulpit the blasphemies which he had prepared against that holy confessor[s]." Antony Wood, himself no friend to innovation, understood in this sense the anecdote of Dr. Gascoigne. "Those," says he, "who are ever prompt to represent God and his providence as dogging the heels of their antipathies, contend that the death of Wicliffe was a judgment from God. The same persons further affirm John of Gaunt duke of Lancaster, because he was a patron of Wicliffe, *pudendis suis miserum in modum ulceribus exesis occubuisse*, and add that, being devoted to lewd women, he contracted a venereal contagion. Whether these things are true, or feigned for the gratification of hatred, I shall not dispute. Certainly most authors assert that this disease was first known in the world long after this period; and it was held, even in the reign of Henry VIII, so infectious, as for it to have made one of the articles of treasonable accusation against cardinal Wolsey, that he approached the royal person at a time when he knew himself to be afflicted with this disorder[t]."

Dr. Gascoigne's tale has certainly every inherent token of a premeditated calumny. His "honest bachelor of

[s] A. D. 1385.

[t] Wood, A. D. 1484.

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divinity" is introduced in a manner, in which no witness was ever brought to an honest tale. If the circumstances he relates had made a subject of conversation between Richard II. and his dying uncle, this chancellor of the university might have found witnesses of a very different fashion to attest his narrative. The story is full of hesitation and secret shame in the writer. The better to maintain it, he adds that the duke was "known throughout all England for a great fornicator;" thus making common repute as to character, the voucher for a particular fact. But Dr. Gascoigne's attestation to general character is probably as ill-founded as his fact. John of Gaunt was indeed in the theological sense a fornicator; for he was for twenty years in familiar connection with Catherine Swinford without being her husband; and this circumstance with some degree of reason gave scandal to the professional guardians of the public morals. But the fact itself of his long and constant attachment to this lady, upon which the scandal is apparently built, affords some degree of presumption that he was not the debauched and general libertine which Dr. Gascoigne would have us believe him.

John of Gaunt not a man of debauched manners.

His character.

It is reasonable therefore that we should dismiss the duke of Aquitaine in this history, with the character of a brave, generous and accomplished prince; too quick perhaps in his displeasure, and haughty in his resentments; but uniformly mild with the mild; discriminating in his friendships, constant in his attachments, fraught with the social spirit and with humanity, ever loyal to his prince, passionate for the glory, the liberties and the literature of his country, of a large and liberal mind, a man whose affection to Chaucer does equal honour to both parties; and in a word, as he has

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been held by the multitude of his countrymen from the fourteenth century to the present hour, one of the most honourable specimens of the character of an old English baron, which the history of this island is able to exhibit.

His estates confiscated to the crown.

There seemed a sort of fatality in the measures employed by Richard II. at this period of his reign. Bolingbroke, before he set out on his exile, had obtained from Richard letters patent, authorising him to take possession of his paternal inheritance by deputy, in case the duke of Aquitaine died in his absence [u]. John of Gaunt however had no sooner expired, than Richard, abetted by his committee of parliament, revoked these letters; thus at a single stroke depriving Bolingbroke of this immense succession [u]. He further proceeded to the violent measure of arraigning Henry Bowet, afterward archbishop of York, his own chaplain, on the charge of having been "of counsel in the device made to Bolingbroke in these letters;" and he was adjudged to die; but his sentence, in consideration of his profession, was afterward commuted into that of banishment [u]. About the same time, Roger Mortimer earl of March, who had been recognised by parliament as heir to the crown, and who had for several years presided over the government of Ireland, was killed in a skirmish with the barbarous natives of that country [x]. Richard, irritated at the intelligence, and prompted by love for his deceased kinsman, resolved upon an expedition against his destroyers [x], and, eager for the accomplishment of this new object, entirely overlooked the perilous state of affairs at home. The

Richard II. goes into Ireland. May.

[u] Cotton, and Parl. History, ubi supra.

[x] Walsingham, ad ann.

measures also which he adopted for the purpose of equipping his expedition, were singularly impolitic, vexatious and oppressive. CHAP. LIII. 1399.

Character and dispositions of Henry of Bolingbroke.

Henry of Bolingbroke was restrained by no such considerations as had governed the public life of his father. No sooner had John of Gaunt sailed upon his expedition to Spain in 1386, than Bolingbroke, taking advantage of his absence, had joined in the machinations of Thomas of Woodstock; and he had been one of the five lords-appellants who soon after brought sir Simon Burley and the other favourites of Richard to the scaffold [1]. He might therefore, as reasonably as that prince, or as the earls of Arundel and Warwick, have been brought to account for his conduct on that occasion, had not his father stood between him and the royal vengeance, and procured him impunity. He had, then, reason to believe that he should never be entirely safe under the reign of Richard. He entered willingly into the opinion that all things are lawful when a crown is the end in view; and he felt none of those scruples of the chivalrous character, which represented loyalty as one of the principal constituents of a truly honourable disposition. He saw with delight that Richard with the flower of the military forces of England was removed to a distance, that his government was every where both hated and despised, and that Mortimer, the next heir to the crown, being dead, had left only an infant family to inherit his claim [2]. He be-

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[1] Cotton, 11 Ric. 2.

[2] Edmund, the eldest son, was eight years of age. Dugdale, Baronage, Vol. I, art. Mortimer.

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lieved that he should be for ever worthy of contempt as a politician, if he did not eagerly set himself to improve a situation in which so many circumstances cooperated for his success.

Lands in England. July 4.

Bolingbroke proceeded by gentle and plausible steps to the attainment of the great object he had in view. He landed in England with a very small number of followers [a].

His apparent moderation.

Being come, he protested that he did not entertain a thought injurious to the established government, and had no design in his expedition but to claim in person, since he was not permitted to do so by his representative, the extensive domains of his deceased father. Many of the English nobility resorted to him in support of this his equitable pretension, immediately on his arrival. It was the general sentiment that he had been most unjustly treated; and no one was willing to resist him. He observed the state of things; he calculated his measures with consummate craft and duplicity. He proceeded in a short time further, to undertake to reform the administration of government, and to remove the evil ministers who had advised Richard to the murder of his uncle, and to the other violent measures which had lately been pursued. The whole kingdom seemed, as it were by concert, to embrace the party of the invader; the duke of York, who had been left regent, after a show of resistance joined him; and three of the king's principal advisers were put to death by summary execution [a]. The new state of things was wholly unexpected; the revolution was sudden and complete; and men had not

His success.

Puts to death the favourites of Richard.

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[a] Walsingham, ad ann.

time to reflect upon the calamities which would probably result from placing a bold and insolent usurper upon the throne. Richard, immediately on receiving the news of the invasion, returned to defend his birthright, was deserted by his followers, and taken prisoner [b]; and, in less than three months from the landing of Henry, this daring invader was proclaimed king, and entered into undisputed possession of the functions of royalty.

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Richard II returns. August.

Is taken prisoner.

Deposed.

Behaviour of Chaucer on that event.

Contrasted with that of Gower.

It is necessary that we should recollect these particulars, that we may estimate properly the conduct of the father of English poetry in this last period of his life. The behaviour of Gower, his brother-poet, on this revolution has already been related [c]. He was one of the first to congratulate the new king upon his unexpected and ill-gotten dignity; and he thought he could never sufficiently exercise his talent in encomiums upon this great event. Nor can we severely condemn his feelings or his conduct; he experienced an awful joy at seeing the murder of his great protector and patron so soon and signally avenged. But his feelings were those of a man and a friend, not of one deeply interested in and profoundly attentive to the welfare of the community.

Chaucer preserved the most inviolable silence. Not one line has he dedicated to this revolution; not in one passage of his works is there any mention of Henry of Bolingbroke. He was a younger man than Gower; and we may infer, from the number of documents which relate to

[b] Walsingham, ad ann.

[c] Vol. I, Chap. XVII.

CHAP. LIII. 1399. him in the short remainder of his life, that he was in reasonable health, and in full possession of his faculties.

Chaucer had many motives that Gower had not, to pay his devotions to the new lord of the ascendant. Henry IV. was the son of the man to whom he had been unreservedly attached through life, and who had never ceased to load him with benefits. He had therefore a sort of hereditary claim upon him. We may believe, from the multitude of verses in which Gower has celebrated the usurper, that Henry was ambitious of the suffrage of the muses; and indeed it was in the character of so artful a statesman, to desire this in addition to the other means of supporting his throne. The Beauforts, nephews to Chaucer's wife, were particularly distinguished by Henry IV. who was their brother by the father's side: the earl of Somerset was appointed by him in the first year of his reign chamberlain of England [d]; and in the sequel Thomas, afterward duke of Exeter, lord high admiral and lord chancellor [e]; while Henry bishop of Lincoln, was successively nominated to the see of Winchester, and obtained the hat of a cardinal [e]. Nor was the king inattentive to the poet or his family. Chaucer had not only his former grants confirmed to him, but also received an additional grant of forty marks *per annum*; and Thomas, his son, obtained from the bounty of the sovereign a variety of other distinctions, beside being appointed to the office of chief butler, and elected, as it should seem

[d] Sandford, Book IV, Chap. VIII. [e] Ditto, Chap. I.

through the influence of the crown, speaker of the house of commons. CHAP. LIII. 1399.

These things considered, the contrast between the behaviour of Chaucer and Gower on this memorable occasion cannot fail to appear striking. Chaucer, we have a right to believe, as a patriot, anticipated the consequences of the usurpation with terror. He felt that it would be unworthy the respect he entertained for the memory of John of Gaunt, one of whose most cherished principles was loyalty, and who, he was sure, would, if yet living, have been among the bitterest censurers of the conduct of his son, to join the crowd of adulators drawn together by the attraction of a splendid crime. He disdained to prostitute himself to the applause of a bold and dazzling act, pregnant with the direst calamities to his country. As a poet, he felt too deeply the sacredness of the muse, to be able to lend his talents to the temporising politics of the day, or to employ his pen, for any motives of private interest or affection, in blazoning the cause of guilt. As an old man on the brink of the grave, his feelings were too serious, to allow him, as the last act of his life, to praise that by which he might be benefited, but which was unworthy of praise, and which all posterity would condemn.

Stanzas, entitled Chaucer to his Emptie Purse.

One exception to this statement occurs, if our poet be really the author of the Envoy to a well-humoured and pleasant little copy of verses, entitled Chaucer to his Emptie Purse. These stanzas have the appearance of referring to the last period of the poet's life, when he came to London, as it has been said, for the purpose of soliciting his affairs at court, somewhat deranged by the late revolution. Henry IV. annulled the proceedings of that as-

CHAP. LIII. 1399. sembly of the legislature which had been convoked on occasion of Woodstock's conspiracy [f]; and it has therefore been supposed that all the grants and acts of authority of the two last years of Richard were treated by his successor as void. This circumstance has been understood as affecting the resources of Chaucer, and obliging him to repair to the metropolis to petition the renewal of his grants. The stanzas, named, Chaucer to his Emptie Purse, are in agreement with this representation. In the course of them, the poet gaily intreats of his purse, if she "wol not be his tresoure," and supply him to the extent of his wish, that at least she will not wholly desert him:

> Out of this towné helpe me by your might!

and a little further on,

> For I am shave as nighe as any [g] frere.

The Envoy, which is comprised in five lines, commences,

> O conquerour of [h] Brutés Albion,
> Which that, by lyne, and fre eleccion,
> Ben very kinge.

This couplet may without hesitation be referred to Henry IV, as it insists upon nearly the same grounds of claim

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[f] Cotton, 1 Hen. 4.

[g] friar.

[h] Brute, the first conqueror of England according to the fabulous history of Geoffrey of Monmouth.

to the crown, as Henry himself alluded to when in open parliament he challenged the succession [i].

Their character.

It would be by no means extraordinary, if Chaucer, in writing this couplet, should have satisfied himself with the thought that there was a wide difference, as indeed there is, between an incidental epilogue to a courtly copy of verses in which the poet is soliciting his affairs, and such elaborate and fulsome panegyrics as Gower addressed to the new sovereign; and should have allowed himself in the one, while he conscientiously abstained from the other.

Not a genuine production of Chaucer.

We must however by no means hastily conclude that this compliment to the usurper, slight as it is, was penned by Chaucer. Every lover of poetry in England, for two centuries after Chaucer's death, made the writings of this poet his principal study: many who incidentally courted the muse, were willing to shoot in his Ulysses's bow, and were gratified, if, in the dust and confusion of manuscripts, a few lines of theirs might pass upon the world for his. This is the true source of the several surreptitious narratives which have been intruded into the Canterbury Tales, and which Mr. Tyrwhit has so judiciously weeded out. It would be nothing wonderful then, if, in the midst of "the heap of rubbish [k]," which Stow and others admitted into their editions, the Envoy in question, or even the whole of the stanzas, entitled Chaucer to his Emptie Purse, should have been falsely attributed to our author.

Contradicted by his real history.

An argument that this is really the case arises from the

[i] Cotton, 1 Hen. 4. Parl. History, ad ann.

[k] Tyrwhit, Account of the Works of Chaucer, prefixed to his Glossary.

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consideration, that they do not well accord with what, from other sources, we know of Chaucer's situation at this time. It has been proved by a crowd of witnesses that in the latter part of his life he tenanted Donnington-Castle; and it has been shown to be extremely probable, that this mansion was given him by John of Gaunt, to raise him from the plebeian rank to which he had hitherto belonged. It is not likely that the uncle-in-law of cardinal Beaufort and his brothers; the father of him who in the second year of Henry IV. was speaker of the house of commons; and a man who was in some sense kinsman to the king; should have been in the forlorn circumstances described in these stanzas, "shave as nighe as any frere," and unable to remove himself from London to his provincial home. It has been said by some biographers, that, "all the publick acts of the deposed king Richard in the twenty-first year of his reign being declared void, Chaucer was forced to quit his retirement, to come up to town to solicit his causes [l]." But this has probably been affirmed by inference from the stanzas in question, and is contradicted by the records; from which it appears that the ground of his soliciting the renewal of his patents was not any supposed want of validity in the grants of Richard, but that Chaucer had by some accident lost or mislaid them; and they were immediately renewed on its appearing from the copies in the rolls, that such grants had been made to him by the late sovereign [m].

Chaucer removes to London.

We know however that Chaucer came to London, in

[l] Biographia Britannica, art. Chaucer.

[m] Appendix, No. XXV.

the last year of his life, and that he died there; though we do not know the cause of this removal. Leland says that, "toward the close of his life, when his hairs were grey, and the infirmities of age pressed heavily upon him, he found himself obliged to come to London for the arrangement of his affairs, and there died[n]:" and, though the work of Leland, containing this information, is not distinguished for accuracy, its statement in this point is partly confirmed to us by an independent and unquestionable document. There is preserved, among the records in the office of the dean and chapter of Westminster, a lease, made to Chaucer by Robert Hermodesworth, keeper of the chapel of St. Mary at Westminster, in the name of the abbot, prior and convent of Westminster, of a tenement situate in the garden of this chapel; for the term of fifty-three years, but determinable by the death of Chaucer; at the yearly rent of fifty-three shillings and four pence[o]. The date of this lease however, the twenty-fourth of December, does not accord with the supposition, that the object of Chaucer in his journey to London was to solicit the renewal of his grants. That object was obtained by him on the eighteenth of October, eighteen days after the accession of the new sovereign[p]; and a further pension of forty marks *per annum* was settled upon him five days earlier[q]. It is clear therefore that the question of these grants was attended with no difficulty; and it is reasonable to believe that the favour

Rents a house near Westminster Abbey.

His pensions renewed.

A further pension conferred upon him.

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[n] Scriptores Britannici, cap. dv.

[o] Appendix, No. XXVI.

[p] Appendix, No. XXV.

[q] Appendix, No. XXIV.

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which Chaucer obtained, sprung from the spontaneous friendship and kindness of Henry IV.

Why Chaucer, who was more than seventy years of age, should hire a house for fifty-three years, seems difficult to discover. The reason of his removing to London probably was, that, in the present perilous state of revolution, he deemed a country-residence scarcely safe, and judged that the proper retreat for one resolved to take no part in political affairs, was the metropolis.

1400. Plot for the assassination of Henry IV.

The short remainder of the life of Chaucer was not undistinguished by memorable public events. A conspiracy was formed toward the close of the year for the assassination of the usurper; and, what is sufficiently remarkable, the consultations for this purpose are said by some of our old chroniclers[r] to have been held in the house of the abbot of Westminster, nearly adjoining to that which had lately been leased to Chaucer. This story however, so far as relates to the abbot of Westminster, has been completely refuted[s]. The principals in the plot were[t] the earl of Huntingdon half-brother to the deposed king, the earl of Rutland eldest son of Edmund of Langley duke of York, and other companions of the riotous and dissolute hours of the unfortunate monarch; who, having been treated with considerable rigour by the first parliament of

[r] Hall and Hollinshed. The story has been repeated by Sandford, Kennet, Rapin and Henry.

[s] Widmore, History of Westminster Abbey, ad ann.

[t] Walsingham, ad ann.

Henry IV, were at the same time left at large to pursue their revenge. The administration however of Richard II. had become so hateful to the common people, that, when the conspiracy was detected, and some of the principal of those engaged in it had taken refuge in the castle of Cirencester, they were beset by the populace, and, having fired the town in their own defence, were dragged into the market-place, and there beheaded [u]. Near forty persons of distinction were thus executed, by orders from Henry IV, or otherwise [w]; one of whom, the earl of Huntingdon, had for his consort a daughter of the deceased John of Gaunt, and sister to the present king. The earl of Rutland had previously made his peace by betraying his associates.

1400.

Executions.

The event of this conspiracy was not less fatal to the unhappy Richard; who survived the destruction of his kindred and partisans only by a few weeks, having perished with hunger in the castle of Pomfret, where he was confined, and in which, sixteen years before, John of Gaunt had been obliged to take refuge from the snares which Richard spread for his life. Either the suspicious and unrelenting usurper, irritated by the conspiracy, issued orders for the destruction of his rival by these cruel means: or, which is the report of the contemporary historians, and is sufficiently coincident with what we know of the dispo-

Death of Richard II. Feb. 14.

[u] Walsingham, ad ann.

[w] Hall, Hollinshed, &c. Walsingham, who does not specify any number, says, *quamplures hujus conspirationis conscii morte mulctati sunt;* and again, *plures acceperunt similem mortis sortem.*

CHAP. LIII. 1400.

sition of the misguided prince, hearing of this general massacre of his friends, he refused all nourishment, and voluntarily followed them to the tomb [x].

The body of Richard was brought to London, the face being uncovered and exposed to view in every town on the road, and in St. Paul's cathedral, that his death might be universally known, and that it might be believed that no violence had been practised against him [x].

[x] Walsingham and Otterbourne, ad ann. The first author, who mentions the tale of his being murdered by eight assassins, is Fabian. He however coolly affirms of this story, that it is what "of moste wryters is testyfied and alleged." Scrope, archbishop of York, who was beheaded for high treason in 1405, asserts, in the manifesto in which he announced his rebellion, that Richard perished in consequence of being denied all sustenance, having first endured the miseries of hunger and thirst for fifteen days and nights. (Anglia Sacra, Pars II, art. 18.) The testimony of this distinguished personage however is somewhat allayed, not only by the consideration of the nature of such a manifesto, in which the opposite party is of course to be loaded with every crime, but also by the phrase with which his assertion is qualified, "*ubi in fame, siti ac frigore,* UT VULGARITER DICITUR, *eum crucifixerunt, interemerunt et occiderunt.*"—This Scrope, brother to the earl of Wiltshire one of the favourites of the unhappy Richard, and descended from the Scropes of Masham, was of a very different family, as well as character, from Richard lord Scrope of Bolton, the friend of Chaucer.

CHAP. LIV.

DEATH OF CHAUCER.

CHAUCER died on the twenty-fifth of October of the present year, in London, and no doubt in the house he had hired from the abbot of Westminster, the situation of which is said to have been nearly on the same spot where Henry VII's. chapel now stands[a]. CHAP. LIV. 1400.

Verses supposed to have been written by Chaucer on his death-bed.

There is a copy of verses, which appears to be genuine, and which is contained in all the editions, entitled, Gode Counsaile of Chaucer; that is said to have been "made by him upon his dethe bedde lying in his grete anguysse[b]." The notion that it was so composed is somewhat corroborated by the phraseology of the fourth line from the end, which has no strict connection with the preceding part of the composition. Mr. Tyrwhit justly observes, that, "of

[a] Widmore, History of Westminster Abbey, ad ann. 1502, 3.

[b] Speght, Life of Chaucer: his books. A manuscript in the Cotton Library (Otho, A. 18: see the Life of Chaucer in Urry, and Tyrwhit, Account of Chaucer's Works prefixed to Glossary) exhibiting the above title, or rubric, has since been lost or destroyed.

CHAP. LIV. 1400.

such a circumstance, some further proof should be required," than merely the rubric, prefixed perhaps in a single manuscript[c]. The circumstance however may be real: the statement may have been founded upon constant tradition or unequivocal authority. The idea of verses so composed will always be interesting, and the vein of the stanzas in question is calculated to increase this interest. They are expressive of that serene frame of temper, that pure and celestial equanimity, which so eminently characterised the genius of Chaucer and of Shakespear. I shall therefore insert them in this place.

FLIE fro the [d] prese, and dwell with [e] sothfastnesse;
[f] Suffise unto thy gode, though it be small;
For [g] horde hath hate, and climbyng [h] tikelnesse,
[i] Prece hath envie, and [k] wele is blent oer all;
[l] Savour no more then the behoven shall;
[m] Rede well thy selfe, that other folk canst rede;
And [n] trouthe the shall deliver, 'tis no drede.

Painé the not eche croked to redresse,
[o] In trust of her that tourneth as a balle:
Grete [p] rest standeth in litel businesse:
Beware also to spurne again a [q] nalle;
Strive not as doth a [r] crocké with a walle;

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[c] ubi supra.
[d] press, multitude crowding in the pursuit of advancement. [e] sincerity.
[f] Live according to thy means. [g] hoarding. [h] uncertainty.
[i] Ambition. [k] opulence is every where a prey to censure.
[l] Indulge thy appetite no more. [m] Judge.
[n] sincerity, out of doubt, shall be thy deliverance. [o] In confidence of Fortune.
[p] tranquillity. [q] nail. [r] cup, a piece of pottery.

[s] Demeth thy self, that demest others dede;
And trouthe the shall deliver, 'tis no drede.

That the is sent receve [t] in buxomnesse;
The wrastlyng of this worlde asketh a fall;
Here is no home; here is but wildernesse:
Forthe, pilgrim, forthe, o [u] best out of thy stall!
Loke up on high, and thanke thy God of all;
[x] Weiveth thy luste, and let thy ghoste the lede;
And trouthe the shall deliver, 'tis no drede.

Thus then we may have the pleasure of believing, what is sufficiently probable from other circumstances, that Chaucer died, at the venerable age of seventy-two, in the same happy frame of mind in which he had lived, cheerful, composed and serene, at peace with the world, and philanthropically disposed with his dying breath to speak counsels of prudence and contentment to those who survived. Upon his death-bed he was probably attended, if by no other relative, at least by his eldest son, who, if we may judge from the career he afterward ran and the honourable place he filled in society, was nearly every thing that the fondest father could have wished.

Thomas Chaucer proved to have been his son.

Nothing was ever more idle than the doubt which has been started, whether Thomas Chaucer were really the son of the poet. The fact is attended with a degree of evidence rarely to be expected in a case of this sort, when it has not been absolutely ascertained by direct proofs and

[s] Judge. [t] with submission, with content. [u] beast.
[x] Suppress thy carnal passions, and obey the promptings of thy spirit.

CHAP. LIV. 1400.

legal documents in the first instance. The person who drew the pedigree exhibited by Speght, and who has thus vouched with his name for the exactness of the descent, Robert Glover, is proverbially, among men officially concerned with questions of this nature, the highest authority which England ever produced. He died in the year 1588, after having twenty years occupied a situation in the College of Heralds; and the collections he left behind him are so numerous and elaborate, that whatever is most valuable in Camden is held by the best judges to have been derived from his labours and researches [y].

But there are many other arguments, confirming to us the pedigree by Glover. Among the arms engraved upon the tombs of Thomas Chaucer and his daughter the duchess of Suffolk in the parish church of Ewelm in the county of Oxford, the spinning wheel, the emblem of the family name of the poet's wife, Rouet, is one of those which most frequently occurs; and the whole church is paved with carved bricks among which the same figure is repeatedly exhibited. The estates descended in the same manner as the arms, and we find Thomas Chaucer, and the De la Poles dukes of Suffolk, acknowledged as the undoubted proprietors of Donnington-Castle.

The ages of Geoffrey and of Thomas Chaucer are exactly such as the relative situation of father and son would seem to require.

Lastly, my researches among the records have enabled

[y] For this opinion I am enabled to quote the authority of Francis Townsend, esquire, Windsor Herald, mentioned in the Disseration prefixed to Vol. I.

me to discover, that Thomas Chaucer was indebted for his advancement in life to the same patronage, which had constantly been extended to the poet. It appears from the patent rolls of Henry IV. already quoted, that Thomas Chaucer held certain offices in the establishment of John of Gaunt. And it is notorious that he derived his great appointments of chief butler to the king, and speaker of the house of commons, from the favour of the monarchs of the house of Lancaster. CHAP. LIV. 1400.

It is proper to mention that, from Thomas Chaucer, in the third degree was descended John De la Pole earl of Lincoln, who in right of his mother Elizabeth, sister to Edward IV. and Richard III, was selected by the latter as presumptive heir of the throne of England[1]. The tomb of Alice duchess of Suffolk, the daughter of Thomas Chaucer, is one of the most splendid, and in the finest preservation, belonging to so remote a period, in the kingdom. The less ostentatious monument of her father is at a little distance below. A small part of the offices belonging to her mansion here, and nine square fish-ponds which were constructed as the ornament of her garden, are still in existence. There is also a God's House adjoining to the church, built by the duchess and her consort, the establishment of which retains its original character. The village of Ewelm is singularly beautiful, sequestered and rural. The princely magnificence of the De la Poles is gone; and nothing remains behind but some slight materials to exercise the curiosity of the antiquarian, or the fancy of the visionary. Antiquities of Ewelm.

[1] Hollinshed, A. D. 1484.

CHAP. LIV.

1400.

As we meet with no mention of Lewis, the poet's younger son, after the year 1391, it is impossible for us to ascertain whether he survived his father, or died in his nonage.

Chaucer a widower.

Chaucer appears to have been a widower at the time of his death. This is clearly implied in the copy of verses beginning "My master Bukton," which has been absurdly printed in all the editions as an Envoy to the Boke of the Duchesse[a]. In it he refers to the Tale, or the Prologue, of the Wif of Bathe, or to both; it must therefore have been written toward the end of his life. The lines from which we derive our information are these.

> And therefore, though I [b] hight for to expresse
> The sorowe' and woe that is in mariage,
> I dare not write of it no wickednesse,
> Lest I my self fall [c] eft in soche dotage.

Chaucer cannot be understood to declare, either in jest or earnest, his fears that he might hereafter fall into the snares of marriage, if his wife were living at the time he wrote. —It would be unjust however, from his playfully expressing an aversion to marriage in the character of a satirist, to infer that he had not lived in perfect harmony and happiness with the mother of his children.

His Interment.

The remains of Chaucer were interred in Westminster Abbey. This venerable edifice had already for centuries

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[a] This mistake is detected by Mr. Tyrwhit, who has supplied the proper name of the person to whom the verses are addressed, from a manuscript in the Bodleian Collection, Fairfax, 16. See Account of Chaucer's Works, prefixed to Glossary.

[b] am called. Tyrwhit, in voc. [c] afterward.

been the burial-place of our kings; and it is probable that at least the most usual motive for admitting the bones of any person deceased into this repository of monarchs, was the honour with which he was contemplated by survivors. A distinction of this sort was perhaps held more sacred in these days of chivalry, than in the more equal times in which we live, when talents and virtues are recognised to be the true nobility. The tomb of Chaucer, in the estimate of the present age, reflects the highest honour upon the roof under which it is placed; but even among barbarians the title of a man to this mausoleum would have been acknowledged, who was in some sort a kinsman to the throne. It is likely that Thomas Chaucer stood by, and saw the remains of his father quietly deposited in the grave. It is likely that his funeral was attended by his nephew, Beaufort bishop of Lincoln, and the brother of the bishop, the lord great chamberlain of England. If these circumstances add nothing to the genuine honours of Chaucer, and if we confess the name of the poet to be greater than all the denominations which monarchs can bestow, yet the most fastidious philosopher may be gratified to see things as they actually were, and to be an attendant in imagination upon the herse of Chaucer. CHAP. LIV. 1400.

CHAP. LV.

CHARACTER OF CHAUCER.

CHAP. LV. HAVING accompanied Chaucer through his public and poetical life, as far as our documents will enable us, from the cradle to the tomb, it may be gratifying to take one connected and concluding view of his manners and habits, to survey the features of his mind, and the principal traits of his character.

Review of his history. His birth. We know little of his early youth, except that he was born and brought up in the city of London; and we seem to have sufficient indications that he was not exposed to the inconveniences of a narrow fortune, and that he received all the intellectual discipline and instruction which the metropolis of England could then afford. If he discovered in his boyish years any of those original powers which have recommended him to our present attention, if his progress in learning was rapid, or if any interesting anecdotes of enterprise, good-nature or fortitude were repeated of him by his contemporaries, these circumstances,

as might be expected, are lost to us for ever through the obscurity of the long interval of time which has succeeded.

His scholastic education.

At college, during the period of his studies at Cambridge, at Oxford, and perhaps at Paris, he was indefatigable in his exertions to attain a knowledge of what man and mind had been in the ages that were elapsed. It perhaps never happened that a man was so devoted to books as Chaucer represents himself to have been at successive periods of his life, without feeling a very early vocation to the pursuit of letters. Ancient history was at this time an unsubstantial and fleeting shade. The writings of the Greeks were inaccessible to Chaucer. But he studied Latin, French and Italian. Virgil was particularly his favourite. The adventures of romance, and the songs of the minstrels, were listened to by him with avidity. Tales of chivalry, of generous enterprise and heroic adventure, had a double interest with him, because he knew that, when he went forth into the world, the men of whom he read, a race that is now extinct, would be the objects of his daily observation and intercourse. The whole world was then romantic, scenic and sublime. The castle of the ancient baron, the magnificence of ecclesiastical edifices, the splendour of the tournament, the solemnity of religious worship yet unstripped of any of its decorations, the troops of monks and friars devoted to the things of an invisible world, these were the objects which met the eye on every side. The mind of man was not yet broken down into a dull uniformity. This was the age of reformers and of robbers. Pilgrimages and crusades invited the consent of the pious. Chaucer too had a particular turn for subjects of humour. And those adventures which have since received their last

Age of Chaucer.

touches from the hands of Boccaccio, Ariosto, La Fontaine and Voltaire, were not feebly shadowed forth in the tales of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

His friends.

It was at college that Chaucer contracted a friendship with Gower and Strode, two young Oxonians of great learning and talents; a friendship which probably lasted for the greater part of their lives.

His professional pursuits.

Chaucer was both a lawyer and a soldier; but he quitted each of these professions after a very short trial, and having collected from the experiment a more exact knowledge of human nature as it is modified by them, than he could have gained merely as a spectator.

His connections at court.

Chaucer was a courtier; but he was a courtier in the best sense of the word, not bowing at levees, not depending upon the smiles and promises of ministers, but associating with their masters, and being the confident of the loves of the generous, and at least as yet uncorrupted, because as yet youthful, offspring of those masters. He probably had a large share in forming the mind of the patron of Wicliffe; the saviour of the bishop of Limoges, of Hereford, and of Swinderby; the generous, gallant, manly and frank John of Gaunt duke of Lancaster. He was the earnest vindicator of his calumniated reputation. He is said to have been employed by Blanche, the heiress of Lancaster and youthful consort of John of Gaunt, to write the godly verses which she chanted as she dropped her beads.

His house at Woodstock.

Chaucer received in early life the gift of a house almost contiguous to the royal palace at Woodstock. This gift could have no other meaning than that his sovereigns were desirous frequently to enjoy his society, and be exhilarated with the sallies of his conversation. He observed intimately

the heroic Philippa; the venerable mother of the Black Prince, of Lionel of Antwerp, and of John of Gaunt; the protectress of the distressed, and the patroness of Froissart. Edward III. and his eldest son, the victors of Cressy and Poitiers, whose glorious forms often pass in review before our entranced imaginations, were the familiar friends of Chaucer, and were equally known to him in their proudest stretch of thought, and in their plainest and most undisguised moments.

His embassies.

Chaucer was an ambassador. He is affirmed by Froissart to have been a principal in the unsuccessful attempt to negotiate a marriage for Richard prince of Wales with a daughter of France. This situation must have afforded him an ample opportunity of observing the temper of courts, the tricks of ministers, and the prejudices and prepossessions of kings.

His public employments in England.

Chaucer was a minister. His place was that of comptroller of the customs. His office was probably by the water side, amidst all the bustle and confusion of trade. Trade was in a considerable degree the passion of his age, for at this time Venice, Genoa and London were powerful cities, made so by the operation of commerce. The comptroller of the customs was enjoined to keep the accounts of his employment with his own hand. Chaucer was seldom absent from the duties of his place, for we find a leave of absence to him for a month formally recorded upon the Patent Rolls, and only one such leave of absence has yet been observed. He tells us himself that he had no opportunity for the pleasures of study, till he "had made an end of all his reckonings," and the business of the day was concluded. This lasted twelve years.

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His patriotic exertions.

Chaucer was a patriot. He never even in thought departed from his allegiance to the grandson of his first benefactors. But he bitterly deplored the evil habits that prince had contracted, and the pernicious counsellors into whose hands he had fallen. He saw them plotting at once the destruction of the man in the world to whom he was himself bound by the most complicated ties, and the ruin of the liberties of the metropolis of which he was a native, and which was dependent for all its distinctions upon the permanence of those liberties. He embarked his all in resistance to their machinations.

His exile and imprisonment.

Chaucer was an exile and a prisoner. He was fated to experience the vicissitudes of human life. He paid in this instance the debt for which we are all of us in some manner called upon, to the condition of our terrestrial existence; and he gained that knowledge, and those wholsome impressions, which are seldom gained but through the operation of adversity. In his exile he was nearly destitute of all the comforts and conveniences of life; and in his imprisonment he witnessed the savage triumph of the unrelenting Thomas of Woodstock, and perhaps saw from his window the victims whom that usurper was daily dragging to execution.

The terms upon which he was liberated from his confinement after five years of oppression and difficulty, are such as no admirer of Chaucer will with pleasure contemplate.

Reinstated in office.

Upon his restoration to liberty Chaucer was appointed clerk of the works, an office on many accounts more agreeable to him than his former place of comptroller of the customs. He occupied this situation however only for a short time.

Being now more than sixty years of age, he retired to his favourite residence of Woodstock. He was tired of business and of courts, and wished to enjoy the pleasures of privacy and nature. He did not however retire to a life of indolence. As he had begun his literary career early, so he finished it late. In a green and vigorous old age he planned and undertook the Canterbury Tales. One of the most extraordinary specimens of active genius and various talent which England has produced, thus appears to have been the fruit of a period of life, when common men think themselves excused from further exertion.

Retires to Woodstock.

Chaucer was probably satisfied with his modest roof at Woodstock. The Canterbury Tales may be seen to have been the production of a serene, a cheerful and contented mind, buffeted by the world, but not broken, and carrying off from all its defeatures and misadventures whatever is most valuable in man. Yet he was not so contented with Woodstock, as to be incapable of being tempted to leave it. John of Gaunt at this time married Chaucer's kinswoman; and he told the poet that now, being nearly allied to royalty, he must change the style in which he had hitherto lived. Chaucer consented. An ancient castle opened its ample gates, and spread out its spacious apartments, to receive him as its inhabitant. Chaucer brought hither the same gay and well-tempered mind which had accompanied him through life: he sat under his own oaks, and in a truly social spirit named them after his benefactors and patrons.

Removes to Donnington.

One event only was reserved for the concluding scene of the life of Chaucer. His sovereign was deposed, and the son of John of Gaunt usurped the throne. Chaucer's

Behaviour on the accession of Henry IV.

CHAP. LV. conduct on this occasion is highly worthy of our praise. He did not oppose the usurper; he did not wish to involve his country in further broils. He was too old and too retired, to be able to flatter himself that he could contribute to redress the wrongs he deplored. But all the benefits of the new sovereign, and all his old connections with and obligations to the father of that sovereign, could not extort from him a line of congratulation.

His death.

Chaucer died easily and happily as he lived; and, if the verses he is said to have written on his death-bed were actually his, they may be regarded as a very extraordinary exhibition of a serene and collected mind in the last period of existence. If he were a lover of greatness, he might be satisfied with the high rank of his wife's relations, and his own nearness to the throne. If he felt anxious for the future prosperity of his offspring and descendants, he must have been pleased with the situation and prospects of his son, who was, in the year after his father's death, chosen speaker of the house of commons. The remains of Chaucer were interred in the repository of our kings, and the place hallowed by his dust has ever since been considered as the resting-place of poets.

Placid and gentle disposition of Chaucer.

The placid and gentle character of Chaucer is conspicuous in all his works. In this respect there is a striking resemblance between him and Shakespear. That genius, whose creative mind soared above all human competition, who could enter into all the peculiarities of man, and personate all his passions, was himself characterised by a temper peculiarly equable and serene. With an intellect incessantly active, wandering amidst the imaginary inhabitants of earth and sea and air, and every day engendering

new miracles to astonish mankind, he perpetually retained his true bias, and rested upon his proper centre. It is perhaps distinctive of a genius of the first order, to perform his greatest wonders without that straining, agitation and effort, that are incident to minds to which the production of any thing above the ordinary level is a matter of difficulty.

His love of cheerful scenery.

The customary cheerfulness and serenity of the mind of Chaucer is particularly conspicuous in his delineations of nature. They all take their hue from the mind of the beholder, and are gay, animated and fresh. He usually sets out upon his walk early in the morning, when the world has been refreshed by repose, when the grass is impearled with dew, and when the delicious scents of field and tree and flower are yet unpolluted by the beams of the flaring sun. Many instances of the beauty of Chaucer's landscapes we have already had occasion to cite. Its sweetness intrudes itself into his most sorrowful compositions. It soothes in his elegy upon the death of the princess Blanche, and it breaks forth with peculiar lustre in his Complaint of the Black Knight. One exquisite example of this feature of the poet's mind it may be worth while to add from the poem of the Cuckow and the Nightingale, written when he was "old and unlusty [a]," and addressed, like the Legende of Gode Women, to Anne of Bohemia, who appears at this time to have resided at Woodstock [b]. The poet is desirous of hearing the song of the nightingale, which yet he had not "herde of al that

[a] ver. 37.

[b] ver. 274.

CHAP. LV. yere," though it was already "the thirde of May." For this purpose he sets out "anon as he the day aspide";

And unto a wodde that was fasté by
I wenté forthe aloné boldély,
And helde the way downe by a broké side;

Til I came to a [c] launde of white and grene,
So faire an one had I never in bene;
The grounde was grene, ypoudred with daisye,
The floures and the [d] grevés alike hie,
Al grene and white was nothing ellés sene.

ver. 58.

Further proofs of the excellence of his disposition.

The sweetness of Chaucer's character may also be inferred from his long friendship with Gower, and from the circumstance of his drawing up toward the close of his life a treatise of astronomy for the use of a boy of ten years. But a circumstance still more singular and worthy of recollection, when we are summing up his character, is that of his being eight years suitor to a lady, probably the same whom he afterward married. A number of traits of disposition may be deduced from this anecdote. It could never have belonged to a person of a fiery and hot-brained temperament; it could never have belonged to a man dissipated, fickle and inconstant. Such things have been related of persons of feeble understanding and emasculate character. But, in a man of Chaucer's force, it marks only persistive

[c] lawn. [d] groves, bushes.

choice, a pursuit, not easily repressed, yet not breaking out into extravagances, a character undebauched and sincere, and a love deeply grounded in the most permanent qualities of the mind.

His conversation in Friday Street.

Chaucer was a man of a frank and easy temper, undeformed by haughtiness and reserve, and readily entering into a certain degree of social intercourse on trivial occasions. This particular is strongly confirmed to us by the curious record of his testimony in the cause of arms between Scrope and Grosvenor. He describes himself as walking in Friday Street in the city of London, and observing there the arms which he had always seen borne by the family of Scrope, hung out as a sign. This inconsiderable circumstance immediately excites an interest in the patriarch of the English language and of English poetry. The Scropes were his friends. He accosts a stranger whom he perceives accidentally standing by, and asks, What inn is that, which I observe has hung out the arms of Scrope for its sign?—Nay, replied the other, it is no inn, nor are those the arms of Scrope; they are the shield of a Cheshire family of the name of Grosvenor.—In Chaucer, the thus addressing himself to a person unknown, is no evidence of a vulgar, indelicate and undiscriminating mind. It shows that he was a character, not fastidious enough to refuse to interest itself in trifles, and frank, even and affable, in his intercourse with mankind.

Convivial temper of Chaucer.

Chaucer was a man of convivial dispositions. This has reasonably been concluded from the grant he received of a pitcher, or what we should now call four bottles of wine daily from the royal cellar. It may fairly be inferred that this wine was designed for the poet's daily consumption.

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His propensity to expence.

Chaucer was a man of expensive habits, and of no very rigid pecuniary economy and foresight. This may be concluded from his frequent embarrassments. Immediately after the loss of his place of comptroller of the customs, which he had held for twelve years, and in which he had "richesse suffisauntly to weive nede, and in delicious houres was wont to enjoy blisful stoundes," he found himself in great poverty. "His worldly godes were fulliche dispente." On his restoration to favour, he obtained the perhaps equally lucrative place of clerk of the works. He resigned this office, and retired to Woodstock; yet no sooner was he settled there, and engaged in writing his Canterbury Tales, than it became necessary that he should solicit another pension. When any of his patrons, John of Gaunt, Anne of Bohemia, or Henry IV, are desirous of demonstrating their kindness to him, the first thing thought of is a further pecuniary provision.

His love of study.

But Chaucer was not less fond of study than of convivial intercourse. There is scarcely one of his longer poems in which this feature of his character is not incidentally mentioned. He reads in bed[a]. In the Parliament of Birds, he had been reading all day long, and it is only when the light fails him, that he falls asleep, and has the dream which he proceeds to relate. And in the House of Fame, the eagle tells him,

——when thy labour al done is,
And hast made al thy reckeninges,
In stede of reste and of newe thinges,

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[a] Boke of the Duchesse, ver. 47.

Thou sittest at another boke,
Tyl fully dased is thy loke.

Book II, ver. 144.

His tendency toward enthusiasm.

Chaucer was a man of an enthusiastic turn of mind. This may well be inferred from the journey he appears to have made, when already forty-six years old, and employed in affairs of state, across the peninsula of Italy, that he might have the pleasure of seeing and conversing with Petrarca.

His person.

Let us add to these features of the personal character of Chaucer, his description of his own figure at the time when he was writing the Canterbury Tales.

Our hoste to [f] japen he began,—
And saiéd thus: What man art thou? quod he.
Thou lokest as thou woldest finde an hare,
For ever on the ground I see thee stare.

Approché nere, and loke up merily!—
Now ware ye, [g] sires, and let this man have place!
He [h] in the waste is shap'n as well as I:
This were a [i] popet in an arme to' enbrace
For any woman smal and faire of face.
He semeth [k] elvish by his contenance,
For unto no wight doth he [l] daliance.

ver. 13623.

Literary character of Chaucer.

With the poetical character of Chaucer we have more

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[f] gibe. [g] sirs. [h] is as fat as a landlord. [i] poppet, *poupée*, Fr.
[k] fairy-like, humoursome, mischievous. [l] offices of courtesy.

CHAP. LV. concern than with his personal qualities. It is because his works live, that we are curious about his dispositions and habits. If it be true, which paradoxical men have affirmed, and envious men have vouched for, that the persons who have made the greatest figure among their fellows are not the persons of greatest merit, and that many who have not unfolded their talents to the world, have been both abler and more virtuous than those we are accustomed to admire, it would yet be impossible to interest us much about such characters. Men of high qualities, but who refuse the discovery of their qualities, if such there be, must be contented to be worshipped by the whimsical only, and to be regarded with indifference by the rest of their species.

His smaller pieces.

The Canterbury Tales is the great basis of the fame of Chaucer, and indolent men have generally expressed themselves with contempt of the rest of his works as unworthy of attention. The enquiries in which we have been engaged have led us frequently to refer to his smaller pieces, nor has our love of poetry come away from the pursuit unrewarded. Many passages of exquisite thinking and fancy have been recited. He indeed who wishes to become personally acquainted with Chaucer, must of necessity have recourse to his minor pieces. The Canterbury Tales are too full of business, variety, character and action, to permit the writer in any great degree to show himself. It is in Chaucer's minor pieces that we discover his love of rural scenery, his fondness for study, the cheerfulness of his temper, his weaknesses and his strength, and the anecdotes of his life. The Troilus and Creseide in particular, that poem of which sir Philip Sidney speaks with so much delight, though deficient in action, cannot be too

His Troilus and Creseide.

much admired for the suavity and gentleness of nature which it displays. There is nothing in it to move the rougher passions of our nature, no hatred, nor contempt, nor indignation, nor revenge. If its personages are unstudied in the refinements of artificial and systematic virtue, even their vices (if such we denominate them) are loving and gentle and undesigning and kind. All the milder and more delicate feelings of the soul are displayed in their history, and displayed in a manner which none but a poet of the purest and sweetest dispositions, and at the same time of the greatest discrimination, could have attained.

His Canterbury Tales. splendid and full of imagination. pathetic.

The Canterbury Tales is certainly one of the most extraordinary monuments of human genius. The splendour of the Knightes Tale, and the various fancy exhibited in that of the Squier, have never been surpassed. The history of Patient Grisildis is the most pathetic that ever was written; and he who compares Chaucer's manner of relating it, with that of the various authors who have treated the same materials, must be dead to all the characteristic beauties of this history, if he does not perceive how much Chaucer has outstripped all his competitors.

rich in the delineation of manners.

What infinite variety of character is presented to us in the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales! It is a copious and extensive review of the private life of the fourteenth century in England.

This has usually, and perhaps justly, been thought the most conspicuous excellence of Chaucer; his power of humour, of delineating characters, and of giving vivacity and richness to comic incidents.

deficient in decorum.

Unhappily the age in which he lived was deficient in that nicety of moral apprehension and taste, upon which is

CHAP. LV. built the no contemptible science of elegant manners and decorum. It has been said that men must have become debauched and consummate in their vices, before they can be masters in this science. This however is not true. There are no doubt various modes of expression, which will excite a prurient sport in the minds of the dissolute, and yet will be uttered with the most unapprehensive simplicity by the inexperienced and innocent; discrimination respecting these can only be the result of a certain familiarity with vice. But neither will these by the virtuous mind be regarded as almost any fault, even when discovered. But the licentiousness and coarseness of the tales of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, copied by Boccaccio and Chaucer, are of a different sort; they are absolute corruption and depravity. The progress of refinement does not merely make men fastidious in their vices; it makes them in many respects more virtuous and innocent: it not only prompts us to conceal some vices, but also induces us peremptorily and resolutely to abjure many.

Peculiar excellence of Chaucer in comic narrative.

The Milleres Tale and the Reves Tale in Chaucer are filthy, vulgar and licentious. The Tale of the Marchant, and the Wif of Bathes Prologue, are in an eminent degree liable to the last of these accusations. Yet it has been truly observed that Chaucer never appears more natural, his style never flows more easily, and his vein is never more unaffected and copious, than on these occasions. No writer, either ancient or modern, can be cited, who excels our poet in the talent for comic narrative. The reader of the most correct taste, though offended with Chaucer for the choice of his topics, will peruse these divisions of his

work again and again, for the sake of the eloquence and imagination they display. The story of the Cock and the Fox, called the Nonnes Preestes Tale, is the most admirable fable that ever was written, if the excellence of a fable consists in liveliness of painting, in the comic demureness with which human sentiments are made to fall from the lips of animals, or in the art of framing a consummate structure from the slightest materials. The Sompnoures Tale, though exceedingly offensive for the clownish joke with which it is terminated, is equal in its opening and preparatory circumstances to any satirical narrative that ever was penned. The entrance of the friar into the house of the sick man, his driving away the sleeping cat from the bench he thought proper to occupy, the manner in which he lays down his walking-stick, his scrip and his hat, and the conversation which follows, are all in the most exquisite stile of comic delineation.

Principal schools of modern poetry.

To understand more precisely the degree of applause which is due to Chaucer, it is proper that we should distinguish between two principal schools in the poetry of modern European nations, the romantic, and the natural.

The romantic.

On the first revival of poetry, the minds of men perhaps universally took a bent toward the former; we had nothing but Rowlands and Arthurs, sir Guys and sir Tristrams, and Paynim and Christian knights. There was danger that nature would be altogether shut out from the courts of Apollo. The senses of barbarians are rude, and require a strong and forcible impulse to put them in motion.

The burlesque.

The first authors of the humorous and burlesque tales of modern times were perhaps sensible of this error in the romance writers, and desirous to remedy it. But they frequently fell

CHAP. LV. into an opposite extreme, and that from the same cause. They deliver us indeed from the monotony produced by the perpetual rattling of armour, the formality of processions and tapestry and cloth of gold, and the eternal straining after supernatural adventures. But they lead us into squalid scenes, the coarse buffoonery of the ale-house, and the offensive manners engendered by dishonesty and intemperance. Between the one and the other of these classes of poetry, we may find things analogous to the wild and desperate toys of Salvator Rosa, and to the boors of Teniers, but nothing that should remind us of the grace of Guido, or of the soft and simple repose of Claude Lorraine.

The natural.

The Decamerone of Boccaccio seems to be the first work of modern times, which was written entirely on the principle of a style, simple, unaffected and pure. Chaucer, who wrote precisely at the same period, was the fellow-labourer of Boccaccio. He has declared open war against the romance manner in his Rime of Sire Thopas. His Canterbury Tales are written with an almost perpetual homage to nature. The Troilus and Creseide, though a tale of ancient times, treats almost solely of the simple and genuine emotions of the human heart.

The allegorical.

Many however of the works of Chaucer must be confessed to be written in a bad taste, fashionable in the times in which he lived, but which the better judgment of later ages has rejected. The poem called Chaucer's Dreme is in the idlest and weakest style of Romance. Nothing can be more frivolous than the courtship of his male and female eagles in the Parliament of Birds. The idea of the worship of the daisy must be acknowledged to be full of affectation. A continued vein of allegory is always effe-

minate, strained and unnatural. This error, so far as relates to the Romaunt of the Rose, is only indirectly imputable to Chaucer. But, in the Testament of Love, and elsewhere, he has made it the express object of his choice.

Reflux of taste in the ages subsequent to Chaucer.

Boccaccio and Chaucer, it might be supposed, would have succeeded in banishing the swelling and romantic style from the realms of poetry. We might have imagined that as knowledge and civilisation grew, the empire of nature would have continually become more firmly established. But this was not the case. These eminent writers rose too high beyond their contemporaries, and reached to refinements that their successors could not understand. Pulci and Boiardo took the romantic style under their protection in the following century; and, by the splendour of their talents, and the treasures of their fancy, bestowed upon it extensive and lasting empire. We have seen how Ronsard, Du Bellay and Du Bartas corrupted the poetical taste of France. In Italy Ariosto and Tasso adopted, and carried to perfection the style of Pulci and Boiardo. Taste and literature had made no advances in England in the fifteenth century; and, in the sixteenth and early part of the seventeenth, our countrymen resorted for models principally to Italy. The earl of Surry and his contemporaries were the introducers of the Italian school in this island. Spenser in his Faerie Queen combined at once all the imperfections of the allegorical and the romantic. Even the transcendent genius of Milton formed itself upon these originals; and, however we may adore the wonders of his invention, impartial criticism must acknowledge that he studied much in the school of

CHAP. LV. the artificial, the colossal and the wild, and little in that of nature.

Merits of the romantic style.

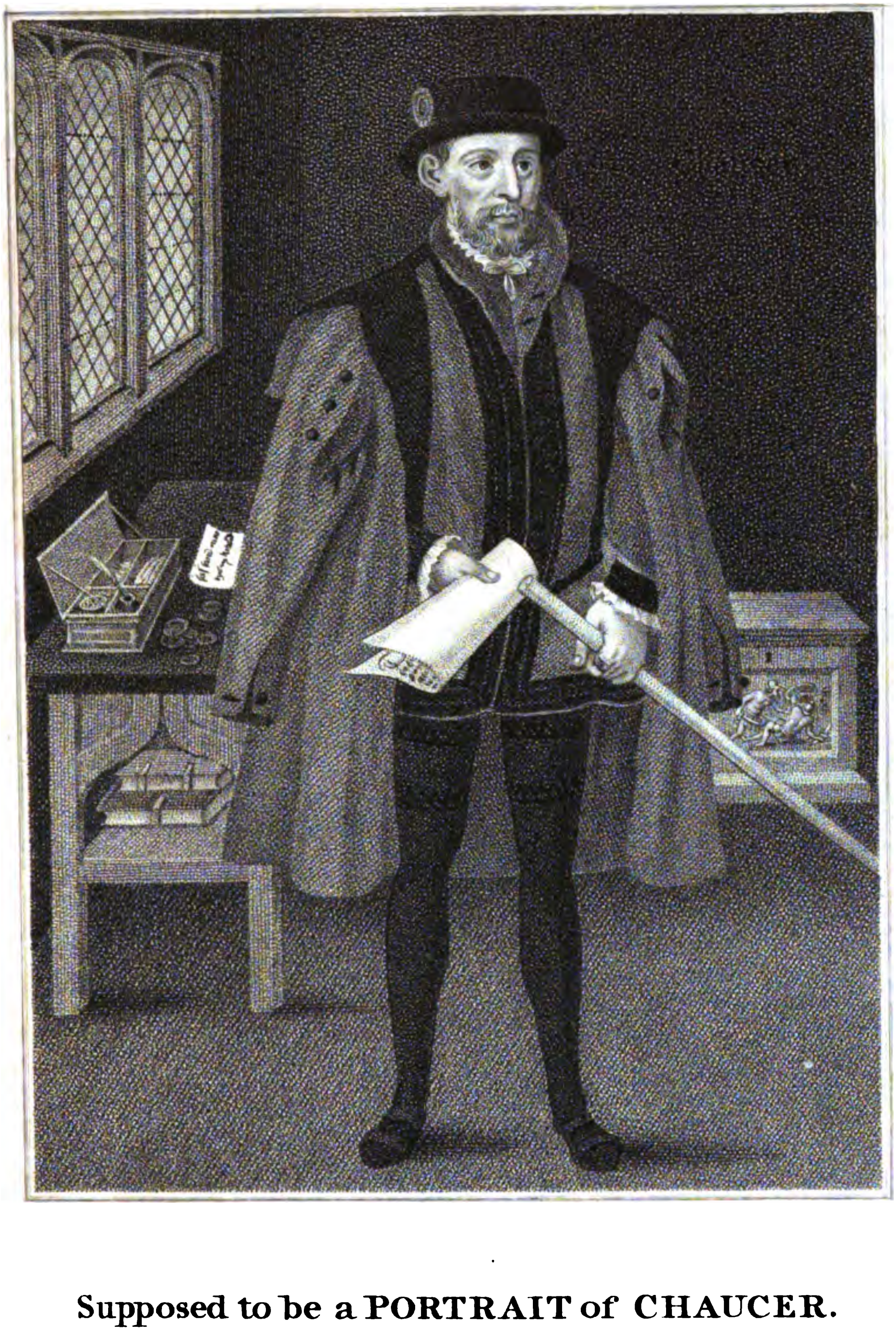
It is incumbent upon us however not to treat the romantic style with too undiscriminating a severity. The fault was in thinking this the only style worthy of an elevated genius, or in thinking it the best. It has its appropriate and genuine recommendations. It is lofty, enthusiastic, and genial and cherishing to the powers of imagination. Perhaps every man of a truly poetical mind will be the better for having passed a short period in this school. And it may further safely be affirmed, that every man of a truly poetical mind, who was reduced to make his choice between the school of coarse, burlesque and extravagant humour, such as that of Hudibras for example, and the school of extravagant heroism and chivalry, such as that of Tasso, would decide for the latter. The first chills and contracts, as it were, the vessels and alleys of the heart, and leaves us with a painful feeling of self-degradation. The second expands and elevates the soul, and fills the mind of the reader with generous pride, complacence in the powers he feels, and a warm and virtuous ardour to employ them for the advantage of others.

contrasted with those of the burlesque.

The natural style restored by Shakespear.

It is time that we should quit the consideration of these two less glorious spheres of human genius, and turn back to the temple of Nature, where Shakespear for ever stands forth the high priest and the sovereign. The portraits drawn by those who have studied with success in her school, are dishonoured by being called portraits; they are themselves originals above all exception or challenge. The representations drawn in the romantic or the burlesque style may be to a great degree faithful exhibitions of what

tion and the muse, the astonishment and awe with which we regard the great father of English poetry must be exceedingly increased, and the lover of human nature and of intellectual power will deem no time misspent that adds to his familiar acquaintance with the history of such a man, or with writings so produced. CHAP. LV.



Supposed to be a PORTRAIT of CHAUCER.

From a Painting found in the House in which Oliver Cromwel was born at Huntingdon.

has actually existed; but, if they are, at least they exhibit a nature, vitiated, distorted, and, so to express the idea, denaturalised. The artificial and preconcerted is only shown, and those fainter and evanescent touches by which every man betrays the kind to which he belongs are lost. The portraits of Shakespear, on the other hand, abound in, and may almost be said to be made up of these touches. In his characters we see the habits and prejudices of the man, and see, as through a transparent medium, how every accident that befals him acts upon his habits, his prejudices, and upon those passions which are common to us all. How precisely is this the case with Justice Shallow? How completely are the starts and sallies of Hotspur, his repetitions, the torrent of his anger, his fiery temper, and his images drawn often from the most familiar and ordinary life,—how completely are they the very man that the poet desired to present to us! Shakespear does not describe, he does seem to imagine the personages of his scene; he waves his magic wand, and the personages themselves appear, and act over again at his command the passions, the impressions, and the sorrows of their former life. The past is present before us.

What comes nearest to the preeminence of Shakespear is the Don Quixote of Cervantes, the Sir Roger de Coverley of Addison, the Lovelace of Richardson, the Parson Adams of Fielding, the Walter Shandy of Sterne, and the Hugh Strap of Smollet. Fletcher also, though perhaps his most conspicuous merits are of another sort, has great excellence in the animating of character, as will readily be discerned, particularly in his Wit Without Money, and his Little French Lawyer.

CHAP. LV. The successive description of the several pilgrims in the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales, is worthy to class with these. No writer has ever exhibited so great a variety of talent in so short a compass, as Chaucer has done in this instance.

Rank to which Chaucer, as poet, belongs, considered.

The place which any author of works of imagination shall occupy in the scale of merit and genius, depends upon two circumstances, the merit of his poems, and the merit of the poet. The first of these is of the greatest importance. He who aspires to a permanent station upon the rolls of fame, ought to expect to be tried by a naked and absolute comparison of his productions with those of other men, without taking into the consideration the superior advantages other men may have enjoyed, of language, of fortune, of freedom, of information, of scenery to generate a poetical character, or of living models to excite emulation, which to him may have been denied. The reader has to do, strictly speaking, with the work only, and not with the man. His enquiry is into the invention, the fancy, the sentiments and the style; and, if an author tenders to him apologies and reasons why he could not exceed a certain degree of merit in these, this may relieve such an author from the harshness of condemnation, but can never obtain for his performance the stamp of applause. It may be true that the verses of Stephen Duck the thresher, or of the blind bard of Scotland, were extraordinary under the circumstances in which they were written, but a rigorous judge, placed upon the bench of criticism, would answer, "Do not tell me whether the writer of the productions you offer could spell or could see: I am only concerned to know whether the lines themselves are sublime,

Must be tried by the absolute merits of his works.

or pathetic, rich in fancy, or sweet and seductive with native simplicity."

and by the circumstances under which they were produced.

Yet, a writer may lose something of the applause which seems due to him, by the operation of extrinsic circumstances; and therefore it appears but just that he should be permitted to gain something from the same cause. It is the first man who produces an excellent epic, ode or tragedy, that ever engrosses our principal admiration; and another who composes something only just as good, will infallibly be much less respected, commended, or read. The first is in possession of the ear and the favour of the public, and it is a most difficult task to deprive him of the honourable station he has gained.

Interest which the reader of taste will feel in those circumstances.

Nay, though it should be determined that the circumstances under which a work of genius was written could never be admitted as matter of plea in the courts of criticism, they would nevertheless be always topics of interesting research. He must be indeed a rigid and cold critic, who, from approving the productions of the muse, does not proceed to entertain some love for the author. And, from the moment when that is the case, every difficulty with which he struggled, and every obstacle which he surmounted, becomes a darling subject of contemplation to his admirer. The reader of soul proceeds, from esteem of the work, to friendship, sympathy and correspondence with the author. If he wrote in an obscure and barbarous age, if he had none but the worst models before him to copy, if, in addition to all the other labours of the poet, he had a language to construct in which to express his conceptions, or if he were the

CHAP. LV. first to invent a species of poetical composition unknown before, all these are considerations inexpressibly interesting to his admirer.

Their value in the history of the human mind.

The history of the poet too, as of any other man by whom what is extraordinary has been achieved, is a valuable section in the science of human nature. That such works as the Iliad or the dramas of Shakespear have in any way been the produce of human intelligence is an important fact. But the wonder, and the degree of power displayed in any monument of literature, will often be greatly enhanced, when we come to be acquainted with the circumstances under which it was erected. I want, not only to observe the beauty and solidity of the edifice before me, but also to understanding the materials with which it is built.

These observations applied to Chaucer.

Let us apply these principles to the writings of Chaucer. His best works, his Canterbury Tales in particular, have an absolute merit, which stands in need of no extrinsic accident to show it to advantage, and no apology to atone for its concomitant defects. They class with whatever is best in the poetry of any country or any age. Yet when we further recollect that they were written in a remote and semi-barbarous age, that Chaucer had to a certain degree to create a language, or to restore to credit a language which had been sunk into vulgarity and contempt by being considered as a language of slaves, that history and the knowledge of past ages existed only in unconnected fragments, and that his writings, stupendous as we find them, are associated, as to the period of their production, with the first half-assured lispings of civilisa-

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

No. I, p. 12.

DESCRIPTION OF OLD-AGE, AN ALLEGORICAL PAINTING ON THE OUTSIDE OF THE GARDEN OF MIRTH.

From the Romaunt of the Rose, ver. 349—412.

[a] ELDE was ypainted after this,
That shorter was a fote [b] iwis
Than she was wont in her [c] yonghede;
[d] Unneth her self she mighten fede;
So feble and so olde was she,
That faded was all her beauté;
Full salowe' was waxen her colóur;
Her hedde for [e] hore was white as flour;
Iwis [f] grete qualme ne were it none,
Ne sinne, although her life were gone.
All woxen was her body [g] unwelde,
And drie and [h] dwined all, for elde;

---

[a] Old Age. [b] I guess. [c] youth. [d] Scarcely. [e] hoariness.
[f] it would have been no great crime, could scarcely have excited a qualm, so miserable an object did she seem, to have killed her.
[g] unweildy, rebellious to its tenant's purposes. [h] wasted.

A foule, [i] forwelked thing was she,
That [k] whilom round and soft had [l] be.
Her herés [m] shoken fast withall,
As from her hedde they woulden fall;
Her facé [n] frounced and [o] forpined,
And both her hondés lorne [p] fordwined;
So old she was, that she ne went
A fote, but it were by [q] potent.

The time, that passeth night and daie,
And restélesse travaileth [r] aie,
And steleth from us privily,
(That to us semeth [s] sikerly
That it in one poinct dwelleth ever,
And certes it nè resteth never,
But goth so fast, and passeth [r] aie,
That there [t] n'is man that thinken maie,
What timé that now present is,
[u] Asketh at these grete clerkés this—);
The timé, that maie not sojourne,
But goeth, and maie ner retourne,
As water that doune runneth [r] aie,
But never droppe retourné maie,
(There maie nothing as time endure,
Metall, nor yerthly créature,
For allé thing is [w] frette, and shall);
The time eke, that ychaungeth all,

---

[i] much wrinkled. [k] formerly. [l] been. [m] shook. [n] shrivelled.
[o] much pined, fallen in. [p] much wasted. [q] crutch. [r] always.
[s] securely, certainly. [t] is no.
[u] Enquire; *th*, in the language of Chaucer, is the termination of the second person singular imperative.
[w] fretted, wasted.

And all [x] doth waxe and fostred be,
And allé thing destroyeth he;
The time that [y] eld'th our auncestours,
And [y] eldeth kinges and emperours,
And that us all shall overcomen,
Er that deth us shall have [z] ynommen;
The timé, that hath all in [a] welde
To [b] elding folke;——had made her elde
So inly, that to my [c] weting
She might ne helpe her self nothing,
But tourn'd ayen unto childhede;
She had nothing her self to lede,
[d] Ne witte ne pithe within her hold,
More than a child of two yere old.
But nathélesse I trowe that she
Was faire somtime and freshe to se,
Whan she was in her rightfull age;
But she was past all that passage,
And was a doted thing becomen:
A furred cappe on had she [z] nommen;
Well had she cladde her self and warme,
For cold might ellés doen her harme;
These oldé folke have alwaie cold,
[e] Her kinde is soche, whan thei ben old.

---

[x] maketh; *do* is commonly a verb transitive in Chaucer.

[y] maketh old.

[z] taken; part. from *to nim.* The prefix *y* does not, so far as can now be discovered, alter the sense; and therefore, in poetry, seems to serve the purpose merely of supplying the writer at pleasure with an additional syllable.

[a] in wield, in his power. [b] making old. [c] judgment.

[d] Neither understanding, nor marrow within her frame. [e] Their.

No. II, p. 17.

DISCOURSE ADDRESSED BY THE GOD OF LOVE TO HIS VASSAL.

From the Romaunt of the Rose, ver. 2175—2950.

[a] VILLANIE, at the beginning,
I woll, saied Love, over all thing,
Thou [b] leve; if that thou wolt [c] ybe
False, and trespace [d] ayenest me;
I curse and blame generally
All hem that loven [a] villanie;
For villanie maketh villaine,
And by his dedes a [e] chorle is seine.
These villaines arne without pité,
Frendship and love, and all bounté;
I [f] n'ill receive to my service
Hem that ben vilaines [g] of emprise.

But understonde in thine entent,
That this is not mine entendment
To [h] clepen no wight in no age
Onely gentill for his linage;
But who so that is vertuous,
And in his port not outrageous,
Whan soche one thou seest [i] the beforne,
Though he be not gentill yborne,
Thou mayest well [j] seine this in soth,
That he's gentill, because he doth

---

[a] Any thing unbecoming a gentleman. [b] reject. [c] *forte* ne be.
[d] against. [e] churl is seen. [f] will not. [g] in their undertakings.
[h] call, denominate. [i] before thee, in thy company. [j] say.

As longeth to a gentil man;
Of hem none other deme I can:
For certainly withouten [k] drede
A chorle is demed by his dede,
Of hie or lowe, as ye maie se,
Or of what kinred that he be [l].

Ne saie [m] nought, for none evil will,
Thing which that [n] is to holden still;
It is no [o] worship to [p] misseie;
Thou maiest ensample take of [q] Keie,
That was somtime for missaying
Yhated bothe of old and yong;
As ferre as [q] Gawein the worthie
Was praised for his curtesie,
Kaie was hated, for he was fell,
Of worde [r] dispitous and cruell:
Wherefore be wise and [s] aqueintable,
Godelie of worde, and resonable,
[t] Bothé to lesse and eke to mare;
And whan thou comest [v] there men are,
Loke that thou have in custome aie
First to [u] salue hem, if thou maie;
And if it fall that of hem some
[u] Salue the first, be thou not [w] domme,
But [x] quite hem curtesly anon,
Without abiding, er thei gon.

---

[k] doubt.
[l] This paragraph has nothing correspondent to it in the original, Edition 1735.
[m] not. [n] ought to be concealed. [o] worthyship, worthiness.
[p] belie. [q] Two of Arthur's knights of the Round Table. [r] spiteful.
[s] affable. [t] Both to small and (*mare*, more) great.
[v] Orig. *par les rues.* [u] salute. [w] dumb, [x] requite,

Forn othing eke thy tong applie
To speken wordes of [y] ribaudrie;
To vilaine speche, in no degre,
[z] Late ner thy lippe unbounden be;
For I nought holde him, in gode faith,
[a] Curteis, that foulé wordés saith.
And allé women serve and preise,
And to thy power [b] her honour reise;
And if that any [c] missayere
Dispise women, that thou maist [d] here,
Blame him, and [e] bidde him holde him still;
And sette thy might, and al thy will,
Women and ladies for to plese,
And to do thing that may hem ese,
That thei ever speke gode of the,
For so thou maist best praised be.

Loke that fro pride thou kepe [f] the wele,
For thou maist both perceive and fele,
That pride is both foly and sinne,
And he, that pride hath him within,
Ne may his herté in no wise
[g] Meken ne souplen to service;
For pride is founde in every parte
Contrarie unto Lovés arte:
And he that loveth truély
Should him conteiné jolily
Withouten pride in sondry wise,
And him disguisen in [h] queintice;

---

[y] ribaldry, profligacy. [z] Let. [a] Courteous. [b] their.
[c] slanderer. [d] hear. [e] Orig. *fais qu'il se taise.* [f] thee.
[g] Render meek or supple. [h] trimness.

For queinte aray, withouten [i] drede,
Is nothing proude, who taketh hede
For freshe aray, as men may se,
Withouten pride may often be.

Maintaine thy selfe [j] after thy rent
Of robé and eke of garment
For many a [k] sithé faire clothing
[l] A man amendeth in muche thing.

And loke alway that thei be shape
(What garment that thou shalt [m] the make)
Of him that can the best ydo,
With al that [n] parteineth therto,
[o] Pointés and sleves be wel [p] sittande,
Ful right and streight upon the hande;
Of [q] shone and botés, newe and faire,
Loke at the lest thou have a paire,
And that thei sitte so [r] fetously
That these rude men may utterly
Mervaile, [s] sith that thei sitte so plaine,
How thei come [t] an or of againe.
[u] Were streighté glovés, with [v] aumere
Of silke, and alway with gode chere
[x] Thou yeve, if that thou have richesse,
And if thou have nought, spende the lesse;
Alway be mery, if thou maie,
But wasté not thy [y] gode alwaie.

---

[i] doubt. [j] according to thy income. [k] time.
[l] Greatly mends a man's appearance. [m] thee. [n] appertains.
[o] Strings, tags. [p] sitting, fitting. [q] shoes. [r] neatly. [s] since.
[t] on or off. [u] Wear. [v] aumener, purse. [x] Give thou. [y] fortune.

Have hatte of floures freshe as May,
Chapelet of roses of' Whitsondaie;
For soche araie [z] costneth but lite.
Thine hondés washe, thy tethe make white,
And let no filthe upon the be;
Thy nailés blacke if thou maiest se,
Voide it awaie [b] deliverly;
And [c] kembe thine hedde right jolily:
[d] Farce not thy visage in no wise,
For that of Love is nat the [e] emprise;
For love doeth haten, as I finde,
A beautie that com'th nat of [f] kinde.

Alwaie in herte [g] I redé the
Full glad and mery for to be;
And be as joifull as thou can;
Love hath no joie of sorow'full man:
That ill is full of curtesie,
That [[h] he] know'th in his maladie;
For ever of love the sikenesse
Is [i] meint with swete and bitternesse:
The sore of love is mervailous;
For now the lover is joious,
Now can he [j] plain, now can he grone,
Now can he singe, now maken mone;
To daie he plain'th for hevinesse,
[k] To morue' he plain'th for jolinesse;
The life of love is full contrarie,
Whiche [l] stoundémele can often varie:

---

[z] costs but little. [a] Clear. [b] nimbly. [c] comb. [d] Trick.
[e] procedure. [f] nature. [g] advise. [h] Love. [i] mixed.
[j] lament. [k] To-morrow. [l] momentarily.

But if thou [m] canest mirthés make,
That men [n] in gre woll gladly take,
Doe it godely, I commaunde the;
For men should, where so er thei be,
Doe thing that hem befitting is,
For therof com'th gode [o] loos and pris.

[p] Wherof that thou be vertuous,
Ne be nat straunge ne [q] daungerous:
For if that thou gode rider be,
[r] Pricke gladly that men maie the se;
In armés also if thou [s] conne,
Pursue till thou a name hast wonne;
And if thy voice be faire and clere,
Thou shalt maken no grete [t] daungere
Whan [u] the to singe thei godely praie,
It is thy worship for t' obaie.
Also to you it longeth aie
To harpe and [w] giterne daunce and plaie;
For if thou can well [x] fote and daunce,
It maie the gretely doe avaunce.
[y] Emong eke, for thy ladie sake,
Songés and complaintes that thou make;
For that woll [z] meven in [a] her herte,
Whan that thei [b] reden of thy smerte.

Loke that no man for [c] scarce the holde,
For that maie greve the manifolde;

---

[m] canst. [n] in good part. [o] laud and praise.
[p] In whatever thing thou chancest to excel. [q] sparing. [r] Ride apace.
[s] have knowledge. [t] difficulty. [u] thee. [w] guitar.
[x] foot. [y] Also among thy accomplishments.
[z] move in, influence. [a] their. [b] learn. [c] niggard.

Reson woll that a lover be
In his [d] yeftés more large and fre
Than chorles that ben not of loving:
For who therof [e] can any thing,
He shall be [f] lefe aie for to yeve,
[g] In londés lore who so would leve;
For he that through a [h] sodain sight,
Or for a kissing, anon right
Yave whole his herte in will and thought,
And to him selfe kepeth right nought,
After this gift 'tis but reson
He give his gode [i] in a bandon.

Now woll I shortly here reherce
Of that I have ysaied in verse
All the [j] sentencé by and by,
In wordés fewe compendiously,
That thou the [k] bet maiest on hem thinke
[l] Wher so it be thou wake or winke;
For the wordés do little greve
A man to kepe, whan thei be breve.

Who so with Love woll gon or ride,
He mote be [m] curteis, voide of pride,
Merie, and full of jolité,
And of largesse [n] a losed be.

First, I [o] joigne the here in penaunce,
That ever, without repentaunce,

---

[d] gifts. [e] knoweth. [f] willing.
[g] *Perhaps*, If we may believe the lore (*stories*) of foreign lands. [h] sudden.
[i] in abandonment, to confusion. [j] meaning. [k] better.
[l] Whether. [m] courteous. [n] free. [o] enjoin thee as a task.

Thou set thy thought in thy loving
To last withouten repenting,
And think upon thy mirthés swete
That shall [p] folue' after whan ye mete.

And, for thou true to Love shalt be,
I willen and commaunden the,
That in one place thou set all whole
Thy herte, withouten [q] halfen dole,
For trecherie and [r] sikernesse;
For I lov'd never doublenesse:
To many' his herte that woll [s] depart,
[t] Everiche shall have but little part;
But of him [v] drede I me right nought,
That in one place setteth his thought:
Therefore in [u] o place thou it set,
And let it never [w] thennés flet;
For if thou yev'st it in [x] lening,
I holde it but a wretched thing:
Therefore yeveth it whole and quite
And thou shalt have the more merite.
If it be lent, than after [y] soen
The bounté and the thanke is doen;
But in love a fre [z] yeven thing
Requireth a grete [a] guerdoning.
Yeve it in yeft all quite fully,
And make thy gift debonairly,
For men that yeft holden more dere
That yeven is with gladsome chere:

---

[p] follow. [q] half-measure. [r] security, sincerity.
[s] divide. [t] Each one. [v] doubt. [u] one. [w] thence depart
[x] lending. [y] soon. [z] given. [a] recompence.

That gifté nought to praisen is,
That a man yeveth [b] mal gre his.

When thou hast yev'n thy herte (as I
Have [c] said the heré openly),
Than aventurés shull [d] the fall
Whiche hard and hevy ben with all;
For oft, whan thou bethinkest the
Of thy loving, where so thou be,
Fro folke thou must depart [e] in hie,
That none perceive thy maladie,
But hide thine harme thou must alone,
And go forth sole, and make thy mone.

Thou shalt no while be in [f] o state,
But whilom colde, and whilom [g] hate,
Now red as rose, now yelowe' and fade;
Such sorowe' I trowe thou never hade:
[h] Cotidien, ne the [i] quarteine,
It is not half so full of peine;
For often timés it shal fal
In love, among thy painés al,
That thou thy selfin all wholly
Foryetten shall so utterly,
That many timés thou shalt be
Still as an image made of [j] tre,
[k] Domme as a stone, without [l] stering
Of fote or honde, without speking.
And than, sone after al thy paine,
To memorie shalt thou come againe,

---

[b] against his will. [c] directed thee. [d] befal thee.
[e] in secret, to the upper part of the house. [f] one. [g] hot.
[h] Quotidian. [i] quartan. [j] tree, wood. [k] Dumb. [l] stirring.

A man abashed [m] wonder sore;
And after sighen more and more:
For [n] wit thou wele, withouten [o] wene,
In such astate ful oft have bene,
That have the evill of 'love assaide,
[p] Where thorough thou art so dismaide.

After, a thought shal take the so,
That thy love is [q] to ferre the fro:
Thou shalt say, "God! what may this be,
That I ne may my lady se?
Mine hert alone is to her go,
And I abide al sole in wo,
[r] Departed fro mine owné thought,
And with mine eyén se right nought.
Alas! mine eién sene ne may
My carefull herté to [s] convay;
Mine hertés guide [t] but that they be,
I praise no thing what er thei se.
Shul thei abiden then? Why, nay;
But gone and se without delay
That whiche mine hert desireth so:
For certainly, [t] but if thei go,
A [v] fole my selfe I may well holde
Whan I ne se what mine hert wolde;
Wherfore I wol gone her to sene,
Or esed shall I never bene,
[t] But that I have some tokening."
Than gost thou forth without [u] dwelling;

---

[m] wondrous. [n] know. [o] guess, doubt.
[p] On account of which. [q] too far from thee. [r] Divided.
[s] conduct. [t] unless. [v] fool. [u] delay.

But oft thou fail'st of thy desire,
[w] Er thou maist come her any nere,
And wastest in vain thy [x] passage;
Than fal'st thou in a newé rage,
For want of sight thou [y] ginnest murne,
And homwarde pensife dost returne:
In great [z] mischefe than shalt thou be,
For than againe shal come to the
Sighés and plaintés with newe wo,
[a] That no itching pricketh the so:
Who wot it nought, he may go [b] lere
Of hem that buyen love so dere.

No thing thine herte appesen maie,
[c] That oft thou wolt gone and assaie
If thou maist sene by aventure
Thy livés joye, thine hertés cure;
So that by grace, if that thou might
Attaine of her to have a sight,
Than shalt thou done non other dede,
But with that sight thine eyen fede:
That fairé fresh whan thou maist se,
Thine hert shal so ravished be,
That ner thou woldest thy thankes [d] lete
Ne remove, for to se that swete:
The more thou seest, in sothfastnesse
The more thou covit'st that swetenesse;
The more thine herte [e] brenneth in fire,
The more thine herte is in desire.

---

[w] Ere, before. [x] journey, search. [y] beginnest to mourn.
[z] adversity, distress. [a] More painful than any cuticular irritation or smart.
[b] learn. [c] But. [d] let (withhold), nor take away. [e] burns.

For, who considreth [f] every dele,
It may be likened [g] wonder wele,
The paine of love, unto a [h] fere;
For evermore [i] thou nighest nere,
In thought, or how so that it be
(For very [k] sothe I tel it the),
The hotter ever shalt thou brenne
(As experience shall [l] the kenne),
Where so thou com'st in any [m] coste:
Who is next fire he brenneth moste.
And yet forsothe, for al thine hete,
Though thou for lové [n] swelte and swete,
Ne for no thing thou felen may,
Thou shalt not wille to passe away;
And, though thou go, yet must [o] the nede
Thinken al day on her faire [p] hede,
Whom thou beheld with so gode will,
And holde thy selfe [q] begiled ill
That thou ne hadd'st none [r] hardiment
To shewe her aught of thine entent:
Thine herte ful sore thou wolt dispise,
And eke [s] repreve of cowardice,
That thou, so dull in every thing,
Were domme for drede, without speking.
Thou shalt eke thinke thou did'st foly,
[t] That thou were her so fasté bie,
And durst not venture the to say
Some thing er that thou came away;

---

[f] exactly. [g] wondrous. [h] fire.
[i] nighest, approachest: the nearer thou approachest. [k] sooth, truth.
[l] make thee know. [m] nearness, perhaps from the French, *à coté*.
[n] swelten and sweat. [o] thou need necessarily. [p] head, person.
[q] ill-starred, betrayed by fortune. [r] boldness. [s] reprove, arraign.
[t] fast by her.

For thou haddest no moré [u] wonne
To speke of her, whan thou [w] begonne:
But yet, if she would for thy sake
[x] In armés godely the have take,
It should have be more worthe to the
Than of tresour a grete plenté.

Thus shalt thou [y] morne and eke complaine,
And get [z] enches'on to gon againe
Unto thy walke, or to thy place,
Where thou behelde her [a] fleshly face;
And, [b] n'ere for false suspection,
Thou woldest find occasion
For to gone in unto her house;
Thou [c] arné than so desirous
A sight of her but for to have:
If thou thine [d] honour mightest save,
Or any erande mightest make
Thider, for thy lovés sake,
Ful faine thou woldest; but for drede
Thou goest not, lest that men take hede.
Wherfore I [e] rede, in thy going,
And [f] als in thine again comming,
Thou be wel ware that men [g] ne wit;
Feiné [h] the other cause than it
To go that waie, or fasté bie;
To [i] helen wel is no folie.

---

[u] opportunity. [w] art gone. [x] Have taken thee kindly in her arms.
[y] mourn. [z] occasion. [a] real. [b] were it not.
[c] art then.
[d] The honour of a knight lay in his exact consideration for the scruples and reputation of the fair.
[e] advise. [f] also. [g] observe not. [h] thee, thou. [i] conceal.

And, if so be, it happé the,
That thou thy love there maiést se,
In siker wise thou her [k] salewe;
Wherwith thy coloure woll [l] transmewe,
And eke thy bloud shal al to quake,
Thy hewe eke chaungen for her sake;
But word and wit, with chere ful pale,
Shul wanten for to tell thy tale;
And, if thou maist so [m] ferforth winne,
That thou to [n] reson durst beginne,
And woldest saine thre thinges or [o] mo,
Thou shalt ful scarsly saine [p] the two;
Though thou bethinke [p] the ner so wele,
Thou shalt [q] foryeten yet somdele,
[r] But if thou dele with trechery;
For false lovers [s] mowe all fully
Sain what [t] hem lust withouten dred,
They be so double' in [u] her falshed;
For thei in herte can thinke o thing,
And saine an other' in [u] her speking.

And, whan thy speche is ended all
Right thus to [p] the it shal befall;
If any worde than come to minde,
That thou to say hast left behinde,
Than thou shalt brenne in grete martire;
For thou shalt brenne as any fire:
This is the strife, and eke th' affraie,
And the battil that lasteth [w] aie;
This bargaine end may never take,
But if that she thy pece wil make.

---

[k] salute. [l] transmute, change. [m] far. [n] discourse (with thy mistress).
[o] more. [p] thee. [q] forget. [r] Unless. [s] can.
[t] they wish. [u] their. [w] for ever.

And, whan the night is come anon,
A thousand angres shal come on;
To bed as fast thou [x] wolt the dight,
Where thou shalt have but smal delight;
For, whan thou wenest for to slepe,
So ful of piné shalt thou crepe,
Sterte in thy bed about ful wide,
And turne ful ofte on every side,
Now downward [y] groffe, and now upright,
And walow'in wo the longé night;
Thine armés shalt thou sprede [z] a brede,
As man in warré [a] forwerede:
Than shal [b] the come a remembraunce
Of her shapé, and her semblaunce,
Wherto none other may be [c] pere.

And, [d] wete thou wel, withouten [e] were,
That the shal [f] se somtime that night,
That thou hast her that is so bright,
Naked bitwene thine armés there,
Al sothfastnesse as though it were:
Thou shalt make [g] castels than in Spaine,
And dreme of joy, al but in vaine,
And [h] the deliten of right nought,
While thou so slombrest in that thought,
That is so swete and delitable;
The whiche in sothe n'is but a fable,
For it ne shall no whilé last.

Than shalt thou sighe and wepé fast,

---

[x] wilt prepare thee. [y] flat. [z] abroad, wide. [a] much wearied.
[b] come to thee. [c] peer. [d] know. [e] doubt. [f] see, imagine, dream.
[g] *Chateaux en Espagne;* we say at present, Castles in the air. [h] thee.

And say, "Dere God! what thing is this?
My dreme is turned al amis,
Which was ful swete and apparent;
But, now I wake, it is al [i] shent,
Now [k] yede this mery thought away;
Twenty timés upon a day
I would this thought would come againe,
For it [l] alegeth wel my paine,
It mak'th me ful of joyful thought,
It [m] sleeth me that it lasteth nought:
Ah, Lorde! why n'il ye me socoure?
The joye I trowe that I [n] langoure,
The deth I wouldé me should [o] slo,
While I lie in her armés two;
Mine harme is hard, withouten [p] wene,
My grete unese ful ofte, I mene.
But wouldé Love do so I might
Have fully joye of her so bright,
My paine were quitte me richély!

"Alas, [q] to gret a thing aske I;
It is but foly', and wrong [r] wening,
To aske so outrageous a thing!
And who so asketh folily,
He [s] mote be warned hastily;
And I ne wote what I may say,
I am so ferre out of the way;
For I would have ful grete liking
And ful grete joy of [t] lassé thing.

---

[i] ruined. [k] is gone. [l] relieves. [m] slays, kills.
[n] languish for. [o] slay. [p] doubt. [q] too. [r] conceit.
[s] must, should. [t] less.

For, would she of her gentilnesse,
Withouten more, me [u] onés kesse,
It were to me a grete guerdon,
Relese of all my passion.
But it is harde to come therto;
Al is but foly that I do;
So highe I have miné herté sette,
Where that I may no comfort gette.
I [w] n'ote wher I say well or nought,
But this I wote well in my thought,
That it were [x] bette of her alone
For to stinten my wo and mone,
A loke on her I cast godely,
Than for to have al utterly
Of an other al whole the play.

"Ah, Lord! [y] where shal I bide the day,
That er she shal my lady be?
He is ful cur'd, that may her se.
Ah, God! whan shal the dauning springe?
To [z] liggen thus is' an [a] angry thing;
I have no joy thus here to lie,
Whan that my love is not me bie.
A man to [z] lien hath grete [b] disese,
Which maie not slepe, ne rest in ese:
I would it [c] daw'd, and were now day,
And that the night were went away;
For, were it daye, I would up rise.
Ah, slowé sunne! [d] shewe thine enprise;

---

[u] once kiss. [w] wot not whether.

[x] better: the sense is, The sight alone of her would do more to relieve my sorrow, than.

[y] Perhaps, how should I sustain the happiness? [z] lie. [a] wearisome.

[b] uneasiness. [c] dawned. [d] begin thy career.

Spede the to sprede thy bemés bright,
And chace the derknesse of the night,
To put away the [e] stoundes strong,
Whiche in me lasten al [f] to long!"

The night shalt thou continue so,
Withouten rest, in paine and wo.
If [g] er thou knew of love distresse,
Thou shalt now lerne in that sikenesse;
And, thus enduring, shalt thou lie;
And rise on morrow up erly
Out of thy bed, and [h] harneis the,
Er ever dawning thou maist se:
Al privily than shalt thou gone,
What wether' it be, thy selfe alone,
For reine, or haile, for snow, for slete,
Thider she dwell'th, that is so swete,
The whiche may fall aslepé be,
And think'th but little upon the.
Than shalt thou go, [i] ful foule aferde,
Loke if the gaté be [k] unsperde,
And waite without in wo and paine,
Ful ill a colde in winde and raine,—
Than shalt thou go the dore before,
If thou maist finden any shore,
Or hole, or [l] reft, what ere it were,—
Than shalt thou [m] stoupe, and lay to [n] ere,
If thei within aslepé be,
I mene al save thy lady [o] fre;

---

[e] sorrows. [f] too. [g] *forte* ner.
[h] put on thy garments. [i] with great fear and caution. [k] unbarred.
[l] rift. [m] stoop. [n] ear. [o] free.

Whom waking if thou maist aspiė,
Go, put thy selfe in jupardie,
To aské grace, and [p] the bimene,
That she may [q] wete, withouten wene,
That thou all night no rest hast had,
So sore for her thou were [r] bestad.

Women wel ought pité to take
Of [s] hem that sorowen for [t] her sake;
And loke, for love of that [u] relike,
That thou ne thinke none other like,
For, whan thou hast so gret [w] anney,
Shall kisse the er thou go awey,
And hold that in ful grete [x] deinté:
And for that no man shall the se
Before the house, ne in the way,
Loke thou be gon againe [y] er day.
Suché comming, and suche going,
Suche hevinesse, and such walking,
Maketh lovers, withouten wene,
Under [t] her clothés, pale and lene:
Love ne [z] lev'th coloure ne clerenesse;
Who loveth trewe hath no fatnesse;
Thou shalt wel by thy selfé se,
[a] That thou must nedes assaied be:
For men that shape hem other way,
Falsely [t] her ladies to betray,
No wonder is though thei be fatte;
With falsé othes [t] her loves thei gatte;

---

[p] demean thyself. [q] learn, without doubt. [r] distressed.
[s] them. [t] their. [u] relic, *as we now say* jewel.
[w] annoyance. [x] dainty, estimation. [y] ere, before.
[z] leaves. [a] *forte* Sith.

For ofte I se suche [b] losingeours
Fatter than abbots or priours.

Yet with o thing I woll the charge,
That is to say, that thou be [c] large
Unto the maide that her doth serve,
So best her thanke thou shalte deserve;
Yeve her giftés, and get her grace
For so thou maiést thanke purchace;
That she [d] the worthy holde and fre,
Thy lady, and al that may the se:
Also her servauntes worship aie,
And plese as muché as thou may;
Grete gode through them may come to the,
Bicause with her thei ben privé;
They shall her tel how thei [e] the fande.
Curteis and wise, and wel [f] doande,
And she shal preise [d] the wel the more.

Loke out of londe thou be not [g] fore:
And, if suche cause thou have, that the
Behov'th to gone out of countré,
Leve whole thine herté in hostage,
Till thou againe make thy passage;
Thinke long to se the sweté thing,
That hath thine hert in her keping.

Now have I tolde the, in what wise
A lover shal do me service;
Do it than, if that thou wolt have
The mede, that thou dost after crave.

---

[b] hypocrites. [c] bountiful. [d] thee.
[e] found thee. [f] doing. [g] part. of fare, to go.

Whan Love al this had [h] boden me,
I said him, Sir, how may it be,
That lovers may, in such manere,
Endure the paine ye have said here?
I mervailen me wonder faste,
How any man may live or laste
In suché paine, and suche brenning,
In sorue', and thought, and suche sighing,
Aie unrelesed wo to make,
Wher so it be thei slepe or wake
In suche anoy continuelly;
As helpe me God, this mervaile I,
How man, but he were made of stele,
Might live a monthe such paines to fele!

The God of Love than said to me,
Frende, by the faith I owe to the,
May none have gode, [i] but he it bie;
A man loveth more tenderlie
The thing, that he hath bought most dere:
For wete thou well, withouten were,
In thanke that thing is taken more,
For which a man hath suffred sore.
Certes, no wo ne may attaine
Unto the sore of lovés paine;
None evil therto may amounte;
No moré than a man may counte
The droppes that of the water be:
For dry as wel the greté se
Thou mightest, as the harmés tell
Of them, that still with Lové dwell

---

[h] bodden, bidden. [i] unless he buy it.

In service; for [k] her peine hem [l] sleeth,
And that eche man would fle the deeth.

And trowe, thei should never escape,
[m] Ne were, that HOPE' [n] couth them make
Glad; as a man in prison [o] sote,
And may not getten for to ete
But barlie bred and water pure,
And lieth in vermin and ordure;
With allé this yet can he live,
Gode Hope suche comfort hath him yeve,
Whiche [p] maketh wene that he shal be
Reles'd, and come to liberté;
In Fortuné is full his trust,
Though that he lie in strawe or dust,
In Hope is al his sustaining.

So fare lovers in [q] her wening,
Which Love hath [r] shitte in his prisoun;
Gode Hope is [k] her salvacioun;
Gode Hope ([s] how soré that thei smerte)
Yeveth hem both the will and herte
To offre' [k] her bodie to martire;
For Hope so sore doth hem [t] desire
To suffre' eche harme that men devise
For joye that afterwarde shall rise.
Hope [u] in desire catche victory;
In Hope, of Love is the glory,

---

[k] their. [l] slays. [m] Were it not.
[n] is able to. [o] set, placed. [p] makes him think.
[q] their conceptions. [r] shut. [s] however sore they smart.
[t] *in the sense of* prompt. [u] with Desire brings.

For Hope is all that Love maie yeve;
[x] N'ere Hope, thei should no lenger live.
Blessed be Hope, which with Desire
Avaunc'th lovers in this manire!
Gode Hope is curteise for to plese,
To kepe lovers from all disese;
Hope [y] kep'th his londe, and woll abide
For any peril' that maie betide;
For Hope to lovers, as most chefe,
[z] Doth hem enduren all mischefe;
Hope is [a] her helpe, whan [b] mister is.
And I shal yeve [c] the eke iwis
Thre other thinges, that grete solace
Doth to hem that be in my [d] lace.

The firsté gode, that may be founde
To hem that in my lace be bounde,
Is SWETE'-THOUGHT, for to recorde
Thingé wherwith thou canst accorde
Best in thine herté, [e] wher she be
Thinking in absence gode to the.
Whan any lover doth complaine,
And liveth in distresse and paine,
Than Sweté-thought shal come as [f] blive,
Awaie his angre for to drive;
It mak'th lovers have remembraunce
Of comfort, and of highe plesaunce,
That Hope hath [g] hight hem for to winne;
For Thought anon than shal beginne,

---

[x] Were there not. [y] keeps his ground. [z] causeth. [a] their. [b] need. [c] thee. [d] net. [e] whether. [f] quickly. [g] promised.

As ferre, God wot, as he [h] can finde,
To make a mirrour of his minde
For to beholde he wol not [i] let:
Her person he shal fore him set,
Her laughing eyen, [k] persaunt and clere,
Her shape, her forme, her godely chere,
Her mouth, that is so gracious,
So swete, and eke so saverous,
Of al her [l] feters shal take hede,
His eyen with al her limmés fede.
Thus Sweté-thinking shall aswage
The paine of lovers, and [m] her rage;
Thy joye shall double, without gesse,
Whan thou think'st on her seemlinesse,
Or of her laughing, or her chere,
That to the made thy lady dere.
This comforte wol I that thou take;
And if the nexte thou wolte forsake,
Which is not lessé saverous,
Thou should'st not ben to daungerous.

The second shal be SWETÉ-SPECHE,
That hath to many one be [n] leche,
To bring hem out of wo and [o] were,
And helpe many a bachelere,
And many a lady sent socour,
That havé loved paramoure,
Thorough speking, whan thei might here,
Of [m] her lovers to hem so dere:

---

[h] is able. [i] delay. [k] piercing. [l] features.
[m] their. [n] physician. [o] weariness.

To me it voideth al [p] her smerte,
The whiche is closed in [p] her herte;
In herte it mak'th hem glad and light,
Speche, whan thei [q] mowe not haven sight.
And therfore nowe it com'th to minde,
In oldé [r] dawés as I finde,
That clerkés written that her knewe;
There was a lady, freshe of hewe,
Whiche of her love maden a song,
On him for to remembre' among,
In which she said, "Whan that I [s] here
Speken of him that is so dere
To me, it voideth allé smerte,
I wis, he sitt'th so nere my herte;
To speke of him at eve or morowe,
It cureth me of al my sorowe;
To me is none so high plesaunce,
As of his person dalliaunce."
She wist ful wel, that Swete-speking
Comforteth in ful muché thing;
Her love she had full well assaide;
Of him she was full well [t] apaide;
To speke of him her joye was set.

Therefore I [u] rede the that thou get
A felowe, that can wel concele,
And kepe thy counsaile, and wel [x] hele;
To whom go shewe wholly thine herte,
Both [y] wele and wo, and joye and smerte;
To get comforte to him thou go;
And prevely, betwene you two,

---

[p] their. [q] may. [r] days. [s] hear.
[t] pleased. [u] advise. [x] hide. [y] weal.

Ye shal speke of that godely thing,
That hath thine hert in her keping,
Of her beauté, and her semblaunce,
And of her godely countenaunce;
Of al thy state thou shalt him saie,
And aske him counsaile, how thou maie
Do any thing that maie her plese:
For it to the shal do gret ese,
That he may wete thou trust him so
Both of thy wele and of thy wo.
And, if his herte to love be sette,
His companie is [z] moche the bette;
For reson woll he show to the
Al utterly his [a] privité,
And what she is he loveth so
To the plainly he shal [b] undo,
Withouten drede of any shame
Both tel her [c] renome and her name:
Than shall he [d] forther ferre and nere,
And namely to thy lady dere,
In siker wise, ye every other
Shal helpen as his owné brother,
In trouthe withouten doublenesse,
And kepen close in sikernesse.
For it is noble thing, [e] in fay,
To have a man thou [f] darsté say
Thy privy counsaile [g] every dele;
For that woll comforte the right wele,
And thou shalt holde the wel apaied,
Whan suche a frende thou hast assaied.

---

[z] much the better. [a] secret. [b] unfold. [c] repute.
[d] assist thee. [e] in faith. [f] durst tell. [g] entire.

The thirdé gode of grete comfort,
That yev'th to lovers most disport,
Cometh of sight and beholding,
That [h] cleped is SWETE'-LOKING;
The whiché may none esé dó,
Whan thou art ferre thy lady fro:
Wherfore thou [i] prese alway to be
In placé where thou maist her se;
For it is thing most amerous,
Most delitable', and saverous,
For to aswage a mannés sorow,
To sene his lady by the morow:
For it is a ful noble thing,
Whan that thine eyén have meting,
With that reliké precious,
Whereof thei be so desirous;
But al daie after sothe it is
Thei have no drede to fare amis,
Thei dreden neither winde ne raine,
Ne yet non other maner paine.

For, whan thine eyen were thus in blisse,
Yet of [k] her curtesie, iwisse,
Alone thei can not have [k] her joye;
Butt o the herté thei convoye
Part of [k] her blisse, to him [l] thou sende,
Of al this harme to make amende.
The eye is a gode messangere,
Which can to th' hert in suche manere
Tidingés sende that he hath sene,
To void him of his painés clene;

---

[h] called. [i] be eager. [k] their. [l] *forte* they.

Wherof the hert rejoyseth so,
That a grete partie of his wo
Is void, and put away to flight.
Right as the derknesse of the night
Is chas'd with clerenesse of the mone;
Right so is al his wo ful sone
Devoided clene, whan that the sight
Beholden may that freshé wight,
Whiche that the hert desireth so,
That al his derknesse is ago:
For than the herte is all at ese,
Whan [m] thei sene that that maie hem plese.

Now have I declar'd the al out
Of that thou were in drede and doute;
For I have tolde the faithfully
What the may curen utterly,
And al lovers that wollen be
Faithful and of stabilité.
GODE-HOPE alway kepe by thy side,
And SWETE-THOUGHT make eke abide,
SWETE-LOKING, and SWETE-SPECHE;
Of al thine harmes thei shal be [n] leche;
Of [o] bale, thou shalt have grete plesaunce:
Yf thou canst bide in sufferaunce,
And serven wele without [p] feintise.
Thou shall be [q] quite of thine emprise
With more guerdoun, if that thou live;
But [r] al this time this I the yeve.

[m] the eyes. [n] physician. [o] mischief, sorrow.
[p] feigning, hypocrisy, dissimulation. [q] quit of thy undertaking.
[r] *forte* at.

No. III, p. 61.

[The following official papers are printed nearly according to the model exhibited in Rymer's Foedera. To persons unaccustomed to the inspection of our ancient records, it may be proper to observe, that, though here given in words at length for the purpose of rendering them more generally intelligible, they are interspersed in the originals with a multiplicity of contractions and abbreviations. The marks of contraction have frequently a definite meaning; but, in other cases, particularly in the terminations of words, the letters omitted can only be supplied in the manner which the construction and context may appear to require, and every reader is at liberty to supply them as his judgment or skill in conjecture may suggest.

In one circumstance the scheme of printing here employed, differs from that in Rymer. Our old records and Latin compositions of the middle ages universally omit the *a* in the diphthong *æ*; that is, they give *regine, Anglie, predictum, &c.* in the room of *reginæ, Angliæ, prædictum, &c.* It did not appear that this singularity could create much obscurity to any one moderately skilled in the original language; and it therefore seemed most eligible in this point, to exhibit the Latin of our ancestors to the eye of the curious, precisely as they wrote it.]

PRO GALFRIDO CHAUCER.

1367. REX omnibus ad quos, &c. salutem.

Sciatis quod, de gratia nostra speciali, & pro bono servicio quod dilectus valettus noster, Galfridus Chaucer, nobis impendit, & impendet in futurum, concessimus ei viginti marcas, percipiendas singulis annis ad scaccarium nos-

trum, ad terminos Sancti Michaelis & Pasche, per equales portiones, ad totam vitam ipsius Galfridi, vel quousque pro statu suo aliter duxerimus ordinandum.

In cujus, &c.

Teste Rege apud castrum de Quenesburgh, vicesimo die Junii.

Per breve de privato sigillo.

Pat. 41 E. 3, p. 1, m. 13.

No. IV, p. 92.

PRO DOMICELLIS PHILIPPE NUPER REGINE ANGLIE.

REX omnibus ad quos, &c. salutem. 1370.

Sciatis quod, de gratia nostra speciali, & pro bono servicio quod dilecta nobis, Alicia de Preston, nuper domicella Philippe, nuper regine Anglie, consortis nostre, eidem consorti nostre, dum vixit, impendit, concessimus ei decem marcas, percipiendas singulis annis ad scaccarium nostrum, ad terminos Pasche & Sancti Michaelis, ad totam vitam ipsius Alicie, per equales portiones.

In cujus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium vicesimo die Januarii.

CONSIMILES literas habent subscripte, nuper domicelle ipsius regine, de summis subscriptis, ad scaccarium predictum, ad totam vitam suam percipiendis, sub eadem data; videlicet,

Matillis Fisher, de decem marcis per annum.
Johanna Kaulez, de decem marcis per annum.
Elizabeth Pershore, de decem marcis per annum.
Johanna Cosin, de centum solidis per annum.
Philippa Pycard, de centum solidis per annum.
Agatha Lyngeyn, de centum solidis per annum.

Matillis Radescroft, de quinque marcis per annum.
Agnes de Saxilby, de quinque marcis per annum.

Pat. 43, E. 3, p. 2, m. 1.

No. V, 104.

PRO PROTECCIONE.

1370. GALFRIDUS Chaucer, qui in obsequium nostrum ad partes transmarinas de precepto nostro profecturus est, habet literas regis de protectione, cum clausula, Volumus, &c. usque ad festum Sancti Michaelis proximo futurum duraturas.

Presentibus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, vicesimo die Junii.

Pat. 44 E. 3, p. 2, m. 20.

No. VI, p. 144.

PRO NUNCIIS AD TRACTANDUM CUM DUCE JANUÆ.

1372. REX universis & singulis ad quosum notitiam præsentes litere pervenerint, salutem.

Noveritis quod nos,

De fidelitate & circumspectione provida dilectorum & fidelium nostrorum,

Jacobi Pronan,

Johannis de Mari, civis Januensis,

Et Galfridi Chaucer, scutiferi nostri,

plenam fiduciam reportantes,

Ipsos, Jacobum, Johannem & Galfridum, & duos ipsorum (quorum prefatum Johannem unum esse volumus), nuncios & procuratores nostros facimus & constituimus speciales:

Dantes & committentes eis plenam, tenore presentium, potestatem & mandatum speciale tractandi pro nobis, & in nomine nostro, cum nobili viro, Dominico de Campo Fregoro, duce Januensi, & ejus concilio, nec non civibus, probis hominibus, & communitate civitatis Janue,

Super eo (videlicet), quod iidem cives, & probi homines, ac mercatores ejusdem civitatis, inhabitationem suam, in aliquo loco, seu villa aliqua, super costeram maris in regno nostro Anglie, pro applicatione carricarum & navium dicte civitatis cum bonis & mercandisis eorumdem civium & mercatorum, aptam & competentem habere valeant,

Nec non super franchesiis, libertatibus, immunitatibus & privilegiis, eisdem civibus & mercatoribus ad dictum locum & alibi in dictum regnum nostrum causa mercandisandi accessuris vel moraturis, per nos concedendis,

Et ad nos, de omnibus & singulis que sic inter nos & ipsos, ducem & concilium suum, ac cives, mercatores & communitatem, tractata fuerint, distincte & aperte certificandum.

In cujus, &c.

Datum apud Westmonasterium, duodecimo die Novembris, anno regni nostri Francie tricesimo tertio, regni vero nostri Anglie quadragesimo sexto.

Franc. 46 E. 3, m. 8.

No. VII, p. 162.

PRO GALFRIDO CHAUCER.

REX omnibus ad quos, &c. salutem.

Sciatis quod, de gratia nostra speciali, concessimus dilecto armigero nostro, Galfrido Chaucer, unum pycher vini, percipiendum quolibet die in portu civitatis nostre Londonie, per manus pincerne nostri vel heredum nostrorum pro tem- 1374.

pore existentis, vel ejusdem pincerne locum tenentis, ad totam vitam ipsius Galfridi.

In cujus, &c.

Teste rege apud Wyndesore, vicesimo tertio die Aprilis.

Per breve de privato sigillo.

Pat. 48, E. 3, p. 1, m. 20.

No. VIII, p. 173.

OFFICIO CONTRAROTULATORIS CONCESSO.

1374. REX omnibus ad quos, &c. salutem.

Sciatis quod concessimus dilecto nobis, Galfrido Chaucer, officium contrarotulatoris custume & subsidii lanarum, coriorum, & pellium lanatarum, in portu Londonie, habendum quamdiu nobis placuerit,

Percipiendo in officio illo tantum, quantum alii contrarotulatores custume & subsidii hujusmodi in portu predicto hactenus percipere consueverunt.

Ita quod idem Galfridus rotulos suos, dictum officium tangentes, manu sua propria scribat, & continue moretur ibidem, & omnia quæ ad officium illud pertinent, in propria persona sua, & non per substitutum suum, faciat & exequatur,

Et quod altera pars sigilli, quod dicitur *coket,* in custodia ipsius Galfridi remaneat, quamdiu officium habuerit supradictum.

In cujus, &c.

Teste meipso apud Westmonasterium, octavo die Junii.

Per breve de privato sigillo.

Pat. 48 E. 3, p. 1, m. 7.

No. IX, p. 220.

PRO GALFRIDO CHAUCER.

REX omnibus, &c. salutem. 1375.

Sciatis quod, de gratia nostra speciali, commisimus dilecto scutifero nostro, Galfrido Chaucer, custodiam omnium terrarum & tenementorum, cum pertinenciis, que fuerunt Edmundi Stapelgate defuncti, qui de nobis tenuit in capite, & que, per mortem ejusdem Edmundi, & ratione minoris ætatis hæredis ejusdem Edmundi, in manu nostra existunt, habendam, cum omnibus ad custodiam illam spectantibus, usque ad legitimam etatem heredis predicti,

Una cum maritagio ejusdem heredis sine disparagatione,

Absque aliquo nobis inde reddendo, seu solvendo, pro custodia & maritagio predictis,

Ita quod idem Galfridus vastum & destructionem in eisdem terris & tenementis non faciat; set servitia rearia, & omnia alia honora, eisdem terris & tenementis incumbentia, faciat & sustentet, quamdiu custodiam habuerit supradictam.

In cujus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, octavo die Novembris.

Per breve de privato sigillo.

Pat. 49 E. 3, p. 2, m. 8.

No. X, p. 249.

PRO GALFRIDO CHAUCER.

REX omnibus ad quos, &c. salutem. 1376.

Sciatis quod, de gratia nostra speciali, concessimus dilecto armigero nostro, Galfrido Chaucer, sexaginta & undecim

libras, quatuor solidos, & sex denarios, de pretio septem saccorum & dimidii, trium petrarum, & sex librarum lanæ, nobis forisfacturorum, pro eo quod Johannes Kent de Londonia lanas illas usque Durdraught, absque custuma seu subsidio nobis inde solutis, seu licentia inde a nobis habita, duxit, & quam quidem summam versus ipsum Johannem ex causa predicta recuperavimus, ut dicitur, habendas de dono nostro.

In cujus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, duodecimo die Julii.

Per ipsum regem, nunciante Rogero de Bellocampo, camerario regis.

Pat. 50 E. 3, p. 1, m. 5.

No. XI, p. 258.

PRO PROTECTIONE.

1377. GALFRIDUS Chaucer, armiger regis, qui in obsequium regis, in quibusdam secretis negociis regis, ad partes transmarinas de precepto regis profecturus est, habet literas regis de protectione, cum clausula, Volumus, &c. usque ad festum Sancti Michaelis proxime futurum duraturas.

Presentibus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, duodecimo die Februarii.

Franc. 51 E. 3, m. 7.

No. XII, p. 258.

PRO PROTECTIONE.

GALFRIDUS Chaucer, qui in obsequium nostrum ad partes transmarinas de precepto nostro profecturus est, habet literas regis de protectione, cum clausula, volumus, &c. usque ad festum Sancti Petri de Vinculis proxime futurum duraturas. 1377.

Presentibus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, vicesimo octavo die Aprilis.

Franc. 51 E. 3, m. 5.

No. XIII, p. 220.

PROCESSUS FACTUS AD CORONACIONEM DOMINI REGIS ANGLIE RICARDI SECUNDI POST CONQUESTUM, ANNO REGNI SUI PRIMO.

DECEDENTE, de nutu summi preceptoris, felicissimo, serenissimo & potenti rege Anglie & Francie domino Edwardo Tertio post Conquestum, vicesimo primo die mensis Junii, anno domini millesimo trecentesimo septuagesimo septimo, & anno regni sui quinquagesimo primo, successit ei rex Ricardus Secundus, filius Edvardi, nuper principis Walliæ, primogeniti dicti regis Edvardi; &, cum tractaretur & provisum fuisset de solempniis coronationis ipsius regis Ricardi, die Jovis, in crastino translationis Beati Swithini tunc proxime sequentis celebrande, 1370.

Johannes, rex Castelle & Legionis, dux Lancastrie, coram dicto domino rege & consilio suo comparens, clamavit, ut comes Leycestrie, officium senescalie Anglie, et ut dux

Lancastrie, ad gerendum principalem gladium domini regis, vocatum Custana, die coronationis ejusdem regis, & ut comes Lincolnie, ad scindendum & ad secandum coram ipso domino rege sedente ad mensam dicto die coronationis, &c, &c, &c.

ET MEMORANDUM, quod prefatus dux, die Jovis proximo ante coronacionem predictam, sedebat, de precepto regis, tanquam senescallus Anglie, in alba aula regii palatii Westmonasterii, prope capellam regalem, & inquirebat diligenter que & qualia officia, seu feoda, dicto die per quoscunque facienda vel optinenda fuerant:

Et, cum, hoc eodem die Jovis, publice proclamari fecit, quod tam magnates quam alii, qui alia officia ad coronationem predictam facere, seu feoda aliqua optinere, clanare vellent, billas & petitiones suas, clamea sua continentes, coram ipso senescallo, vel ejus in hac parte locum tenentibus preferri facerent indilate:

Super quo diversa officia & feoda, tam per petitiones quam oretenus, coram ipso senescallo exacta & vendicata extiterant, in forma que subsequitur.

[*Inter alia:*]

ITEM predictus comes Arundellie porrexit in curiam quandam aliam petitionem in hec verba:

ALE ROI de Castille & de Lyons, duc de Lancastre, & seneschall d'Engleterre, supplie Richard comte de Arundelle & de Surraie, de lui recevre affaire son office de chief butiler, quel lui appartient de droit pur le comte d'Arundelle, recevant les feez & duez:

Et super hoc quidam Edmundus, filius & hæres Edmundi de Staplegate, exhibuit quandam aliam petitionem sub hac forma:

A MON tres honer seigneur, le roi de Castelle & de Lyons, duc de Lancastre, & seneschall d'Engleterre, monstre Es-

mond, fils & heir Esmond Stablegait, que, come le dit Esmond, tient de nostre seigneur le roi en chief le manoir de Bilsynton en le comte de Kent, par les services destre botiller de nostre seigneur le roi a sa coronement, come pleinement appiert en le livre des fees de serjanties en Lescheqer nostre seigneur le roi, & a cause que le dit Esmond le pier mourst seisi de mesme le manoir en son demesne come de fee; mesme cest Esmond le fitz adonque esteant demz age, nostre seigneur le roi, laiel nostre seigneur le roi [1] gore, est seisit le dit Esmond le fitz en sa garde, par cause que fuist *trove* en mesme le livere que le dit manoir fuist tenuz par an par tieux services, & prist les profitz de mesme le manoir par quatre anz come de sa garde, & puis commist la dite garde ove le mariage de dit Esmond le fitz a Geffray Chausyer; pour que le garde & mariage le dit Esmond le fitz paia au dit Geffray cent & quatre livres: par quoi le dit Esmond le fitz soi profre de faire le dit office de botiller, & pria qil a ce soit receu prenant les fees au dit office ancienement duez & custumables:

INTELLECTIS autem petitionibus predictis, auditisque quam plurimis recordis, rationibus & evidentiis, tam pro prefato comite, quam pro predicto Edmundo, curie monstratis, videbatur curiæ dictum negocium, propter multiplicationem negociorum & temporis brevitatem, ante predictam coronationem finaliter discuti non posse: & eo prætextu;

Necnon pro eo quod per recordum de scaccario est compertum, quod antecessores ipsius comitis, postquam dictum manerium de Bilsyngton ab eis alienatum extitit, fuerunt in possessione dicti officii temporibus hujusmodi coronationum;

Et non est compertum nec allegatum pro predicto Edmundo, quod aliquis antecessorum suorum aliquo tempore fecit officium predictum;

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[1] Qui or est.

Dictum fuit prefato comiti quod ipse officium predictum ad presentem coronationem faceret, & feoda debita perciperet.

Jure ipsius Edmundi seu aliorum quorumcunque in omnibus semper salvo.

Et sic idem comes officium illud perfecit.

Claus. 1 R 2, m. 45.

No. XIV, p. 92.

EXITUS PASCHE, ANNO RICARDI SECUNDI QUARTO, 24°. MAII.

1381. GALFRIDO Chaucer, cui dominus rex Edvardus, avus regis hujus, viginti marcas annuas, ad scaccarium ad totam vitam suam percipiendas, pro bono servitio per ipsum eidem domino regi Edwardo impenso, per literas suas patentes concessit, quas quidem literas dominus rex nunc confirmavit, in denariis sibi liberatis, per assignacionem sibi factam, isto die, in persolutionem decem marcarum sibi liberandarum de hujusmodi certo suo, videlicet, pro termino Pasche ultimo preterito, per breve suum de liberato hoc termino.

vi[l] xiij[s] iiij[d].

Eidem Galfrido, cui dominus rex nunc viginti marcas annuas, ad scaccarium ad totam vitam suam percipiendas, pro bono servitio per ipsum eidem domino regi impenso & impendendo, & in recompensacionem unius pichere vini, per dictum dominum regem Edvardum concesse, quolibet die in portu civitatis Londonie per manus pincerne ejusdem regis avi & heredum suorum, ad totam vitam ipsius Galfridi, percipiende, ultra predictas viginti sibi per dictum avum concessas, per dictum dominum regem nunc confirmatas, per literas suas patentes concessit, in denariis sibi liberatis,

per eandem assignacionem, in persolucionem decem marcarum sibi liberandarum de hujusmodi certo suo, videlicet, pro termino Pasche preterito, per breve suum de liberato inter mandata de hoc termino.

vi^{l} xiij^{s} iiij^{d}.

Philippe Chaucer, nuper uni domicellarum Philippe, nuper regine Anglie, cui dominus rex Edvardus, avus regis hujus, decem marcas annuas ad scaccarium ad totam vitam suam percipiendas, pro bono servitio per ipsam tam eidem domino regi, quam dicte regine, impenso, per literas suas patentes concessit, quas quidem literas dominus rex nunc confirmavit, in denariis sibi liberatis, per manus predicti Galfridi, mariti sui, in persolucionem quinque marcarum sibi liberandarum de hujus modi certo suo, videlicet, pro termino Pasche proximo preterito per breve suum de liberato inter mandata de hoc termino.

lxvj^{s} viij^{d}.

Rymer, Mss, in Museo Britannico,
Ric. II. Vol. II.

No. XV, p. 359.

PRO CONTRAROTULATORE CONSTITUTO.

REX omnibus, &c, salutem. 1382.

Sciatis quod concessimus dilecto nobis, Galfrido Chaucer, officium contrarotulatoris parve custume nostre in portu Londonie, habendum & exercendum, per se, vel sufficientem deputatum suum pro quo respondere voluerit, quamdiu nobis placuerit.

Percipiendo in officio illo vadia consueta:

Volentes quod altera pars sigilli nostri, quod dicitur *coket*, in portu predicto, in custodia ipsius Galfridi, seu dicti

deputati sui, remaneat, quamdiu officium habuerit supradictum.

In cujus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, octavo die Maii.

Pat. 5 R. 2, p. 2, m. 15.

No. XVI, p. 458.

PRO GALFRIDO CHAUCER.

1384. REX collectoribus custumarum & subsidiorum suorum in portu Londonie, salutem.

Quia licentiam dedimus dilecto nobis, Galfrido Chaucire, contrarotulatori nostro custumarum & subsidiorum predictorum in portu predicto, quod ipse se per unum mensem, pro quibusdam urgentibus negotiis ipsum tangentibus, a portu predicto absentare possit.

Ita quod sufficientem deputatum suum, ad officium predictum bene & fideliter per idem tempus faciendum & exercendum, pro quo respondere voluerit, faciat.

Vobis mandamus, quod, capto sacramento de sufficente deputato ejusdem Galfridi, de officio predicto in absentia sua bene & fideliter faciendo, predictum Galfridum ab officio suo predicto per tempus predictum absentare permittatis.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, vicesimo quinto die Novembris.

Per ipsum regem.

Claus. 8 R. 2, m. 30.

No. XVII, p. 460.

PRO GALFRIDO CHAUCER.

REX omnibus ad quos, &c. salutem. 1385.

Sciatis quod, de gratia nostra speciali, concessimus, et licentiam dedimus dilecto nobis, Galfrido Chaucer, contrarotulatori custumarum & subsidiorum nostrorum in portu civitatis nostre Londonie, quod ipse officium predictum, per sufficientem deputatum suum pro quo respondere voluerit, facere & exercere possit, quamdiu idem Galfridus in officio steterit supradicto.

Absque impedimento collectorum custumarum & subsidiorum nostrorum predictorum in portu predicto pro tempore existentium, seu aliorum quorumcunque.

In cujus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium decimo septimo die Februarii.

Per ipsum regem.

Pat. 8 R. 2, p 2, m. 13.

No. XVIII.

PRO JOHANNE SCALBY.

REX omnibus ad quos, &c. salutem

Sciatis quod, 1388.

Cum nos, vicesimo tertio Martii, anno regni nostri primo, per literas nostras patentes, sub magno sigillo nostro, approbaverimus & confirmaverimus concessionem factam dilecto armigero nostro, Galfrido Chaucer, per dominum Edvardum, nuper regem Anglie, avum nostrum, de viginti marcis,

percipiendis singulis annis ad scaccarium nostrum, ad terminos Sancti Michaelis & Pasche, per equales portiones, ad totam vitam ipsius Galfridi, vel quousque idem avus noster pro statu suo aliter duceret ordinandum:

Ac postmodo, decimo octavo Aprilis, anno predicto, per quasdam alias literas nostras patentes, sub magno sigillo nostro, concesserimus eidem Galfrido, in recompensationem unius pycher vini per diem, per prefatum avum nostrum, eidem Galfrido concessi, & pro bono servicio quod ipse nobis impendebat & impenderet, viginti marcas, percipiendas singulis annis ad scaccarium nostrum, ad totam vitam ipsius Galfridi, ad terminos Sancti Michaelis & Pasche, per equales portiones (ultra viginti marcas sibi per præfatum avum nostrum concessas, per dictas literas suas patentes per nos confirmatas, percipiendas ad terminos predictos, per equales portiones, ut predictum est, prout in eisdem literis plenius continetur):

Nos, ad supplicationem prefati Galfrido, pro eo quod ipse dictas literas nostras nobis in cancellaria nostra restituit cancellandas.

De gratia nostra speciali, & pro bono servicio quod dilectus nobis, Johannes Scalby, nobis impendet in futurum, concessimus eidem Johanni dictas quadriginta marcas percipiciendas singulis annis ad scaccarium nostrum, ad terminos Sancti Michaelis & Pasche, per equales portiones, ad totam vitam ipsius Johannis, vel quousque pro statu suo aliter duxerimus ordinandum.

In cujus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, primo die Maii.

Per breve de privato sigillo.

Pat. 11 R. 2, p. 2, m. 1.

No. XIX.

PRO CLERICO OPERATIONUM REGIS CONSTITUTO.

REX omnibus & singulis vicecomitibus, majoribus, ballivis, ministris, & aliis fidelibus suis, tam infra libertates quam extra, ad quos, &c. salutem. 1389.

Sciatis quod nos,

De fidelitate & circumspectione dilecti nobis Galfridi Chaucer confidentes.

Constituimus & assignavimus ipsum Galfridum clericum operationum nostrarum apud palatium nostrum Westmonasterii, turrim nostram Londonie, castrum de Berkhamstede, maneria nostra de Kenyngton, Eltham, Claryndon, Shene, Byflete, Childerne-Langeley & Feckenham, necnon logiam nostram de Hathebergh in foresta nostra de Nova Foresta, ac logias nostras infra parcos nostros de Claryndon, Childerne-Langeley & Feckenham, & mutas nostras pro falconibus nostris juxta Charyngcrouch; necnon gardinorum, stagnorum, molendinorum ac clausurarum, tam parcorum predictorum, quam omnium aliorum parcorum ad eadem palatium, turrim, castra, maneria, logias & mutas pertinentium:

Et ad latomos, carpentarios, & alios operarios & laboratores quoscunque, qui operationibus nostris predictis necessarii fuerint, ubicunque inveniri poterunt, infra libertates & extra (feodo ecclesiæ dumtaxat excepto), per se & deputatos suos, eligendos & capiendos, & in dictis operationibus nostris ponendos, super eisdem operationibus nostris ad vadia nostra moraturos:

Ac etiam ad petras, meremium, tegulas, cindulas, vitrum, ferrum, plumbum, & omnia alia, necessaria pro operationibus nostris

predictis, ac cariagium pro eisdem petris, meremio, tegulis, cindulis, vitro, ferro, plumbo, & aliis necessariis, ad loca predicta, pro denariis nostris per ipsum Galfridum solvendis, per se & deputatos suos capiendis & providendis :

Nec non ad quascunque soluciones, tam pro vadiis dictorum operariorum, quam pro emptionibus, providenciis, & cariagiis, & aliis misis & expensis quibuscunque, dictas operationes qualitercunque tangentibus, per visum & testimonium contrarotulatoris nostri operationum predictarum pro tempore existentis, faciendas :

Et ad computandum de denariis quos super expensis operationum predictarum percipiet per visum et testimonium prefati contrarotulatoris :

Et ad operarios, qui pro operationibus prædictis, retenti fuerint, qui ab eisdem operationibus sine licencia nostra, vel ipsius Galfridi, recesserint, reducendos ; & ad omnes quos in hac parte contrarios invenerit, seu rebelles, arestandum & capiendum & eos in prisonis nostris mancipandos, in eisdem moraturos, quousque securitatem invenerint de serviendo in operationibus nostris, prout eis injungetur ex parte nostra :

Et ad inquirendum per sacramentum proborum & legalium hominum de comitatu ubi opus fuerit, per quos rei veritas melius sciri poterit, si meremium vel petre, tegule vel cindule, vitrum, ferrum, plumbum, seu alia necessaria, pro dictis operationibus empta & provisa, asportata vel elongata, fuerint ; & ad eadem mæremium, petras, tegulas, cindulas, vitrum, ferrum, plumbum, seu alia necessaria, sic elongata, ubicunque fuerint, infra libertates & extra, reduci & restitui facienda :

Et ad ramos, corticem, & alia residua de arboribus pro dictis operationibus provisis ad opus nostrum, per visum & testimonium dicti contrarotulatoris vendenda, & nobis de denariis inde provenientibus respondendum :

Percipiendo pro vadiis suis in officio predicto duos solidos per diem de denariis nostris supradictis.

Et ideo vobis mandamus, quod eidem Galfrido, ac deputatis suis, in premissis omnibus & singulis faciendis & exequendis intendentes

sitis, consulentes & auxiliantes, quociens & prout per ipsum Galfridum, seu deputatos suos, ex parto nostra fueritis requisiti.

In cujus, &c. quamdiu idem Galfridus se bene & fideliter in eodem officio gesserit, duraturas.

Teste rege apud castrum de Wyndesore, duodecimo die Julii.

Per breve de privato sigillo.

Pat. 13 R. 2. p. 1. m. 30.

No. XX.

PRO CAPELLA CASTRI REGIS WYNDESORE EMENDANDA.

REX dilecto armigero nostro Galfrido Chaucer, clerico operationum nostrarum, salutem. 1390.

Scias quod assignavimus te ad capellam nostram collegialem Sancti Georgii infra castrum nostrum de Wyndesore, que minatur ruine, & in punctu ad terram cadendi existit, nisi cicius facta & emendata fuerit, sufficientem fieri faciendam.

Et ad latomos, carpentarios, & alios operarios ac laboratores, pro operationibus ejusdem capelle necessarios, ubicunque, infra libertates vel extra (feodo ecclesie excepto), inveniri poterunt, per te & deputatos tuos, eligendos & capiendos, & eos super operationibus prædictis ponendos, ibidem ad vadia nostra, quamdiu indiguerit, moraturos:

Et ad petras, mæremium, vitrum, plumbum, & omnia alia pro operationibus predictis necessaria, & etiam cariagium pro premissis ad castrum nostrum predictum, ad locum ubi dicta capella facta fuerit, ducenda & capienda, pro denariis nostris rationabiliter solvenda, tam pro premissis, quam pro cariagio predicto, per supervisum & testimonium contrarotulatoris operationum nostrarum palatii nostri Wesmonasterii:

Et ad omnes illos, quos in hac parte contrarios inveneris seu

rebelles, capiendos, & prisonis nostris mancipandos, ibidem moraturos, quousque de eis aliter duxerimus ordinandum.

Et ideo tibi precepimus quod circa permissa diligenter intendas & exequaris in forma predicta.

Damus autem universis & singulis vicecomitibus, majoribus, ballivis, ministris, & aliis fidelibus & subditis nostris, tam infra libertates quam extra, tenore presentium in mandatis, quod tibi & deputatis tuis predictis intendentes sint, consulentes & auxiliantes, prout decet.

In cujus, &c. per triennium duraturas.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, duodecimo die Julii.

Per billam de privato sigillo.

Rex dilecto nostro, Willelmo Hanney, contrarotulatori operationum palatii nostri Wesmonasterii, salutem.

Sciatis quod,

Cum, per literas nostras patentes, assignaverimus dilectum armigerum nostrum, Galfridum Chaucer, clericum operationum nostrarum, ad capellam nostram collegialem, *&c. ut supra usque ibi* supervisum, *& tunc sic,* et testimonium vestra, prout in literis patentibus inde confectis plenius continetur,

Nos, de fidelitate & circumspectione vestris plenius confidentes, assignavimus vos, ad quoscunque denarios per prefatum Galfridum, super reparationem & emendationem capelle predicte apponendos, & pro cariagio & aliis premissis solvendos, contrarotulandum, & super computo suo ad scaccarium nostrum testificandum:

Et ideo vobis mandamus quod circa premissa diligenter intendatis, & ea faciatis & exequamini in forma predicta.

In cujus, &c. per triennium duraturas.

Teste, *ut supra.*

Per billam de privato sigillo.

No. XXI.

PRO GALFRIDO CHAUCER.

REX omnibus ad quos, &c. salutem. 1394.

Sciatis quod, de gratia nostra speciali, & pro bono servicio quod dilectus armiger noster, Galfridus Chaucer, nobis impendit, & impendet in futurum, concessimus eidem Galfrido viginti libras, percipiendas singulis annis ad scaccarium nostrum ad terminos Pasche & Sancti Michaelis, per equales portiones, ad totam vitam suam.

In cujus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, vicesimo octavo die Februarii.

Per breve de privato sigillo.

Pat. 17. R. 2. p. 2, m. 35.

No. XXII.

DE PROTECTIONE.

REX omnibus ballivis & fidelibus suis ad quos presentes litere pervenerint, salutem. 1398.

Sciatis quod,

Cum dilectum armigerum nostrum, Galfridum Chaucer, ad quamplura ardua & urgencia negocia nostra, tam in absentia quam in presentia nostris, in diversis partibus, infra regnum nostrum Anglie, facienda & expedienda, ordinaverimus,

Idemque Galfridus timeat, se, per quosdam emulos suos, per quamplures querelas sive sectas, dum sic negociis nostris intenderit, inquietari, molestari, sive implacitari, & nobis supplicaverit, ut sibi in hac parte subvenire velimus,

Nos,

Volentes pro securitate ipsius Galfridi prospicere gratiose.

Suscepimus ipsum Galfridum, ac homines, terras, res, redditus & omnes possessiones suas, in protectionem & defensionem nostras speciales.

Nolentes quod ipse, a data presentium, per duos annos integros, ad cujuscunque persone ectam, nulla tenus arrestetur, seu aliqualiter implacitetur; set quod ipse de omnimodis placitis & querelis (placitis terræ duntaxat exceptis) per tempus predictum omnino sit quietus:

Et ideo vobis mandamus, quod ipsum Galfridum, homines, tersas, res, redditus, & omnes possessiones suas, manuteneatis, protegatis & defendatis, juxta vim, formam & effectum presentium literarum nostrarum,

Non inferentes eis, seu, quantum in vobis est, ab aliis inferri permittentes, injuriam, molestiam, dampnum, violentiam, impedimentum aliquod, seu gravamen;

Et, si quid eis forisfactum, sive injuriatum fuerit, id eis sine dilatione, debito corrigi & emendari faciatis.

In cujus, &c. per biennium duraturas.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, quarto die Maii.

Per ipsum regem.

Pat. 21. R. 2, p. 3. m. 26.

No. XXIII.

PRO GALFRIDO CHAUCER.

1398. REX omnibus ad quos, &c. salutem.

Sciatis quod, de gratia nostra speciali, concessimus dilecto armigero nostro, Galfrido Chaucer, unum delium vini, percipiendum singulis annis, a primo die Decembris ultimi præteriti, durante vita sua, in portu civitatis nostre Londonie, per manus capitalis pincerne nostri, seu deputati sui, ibidem pro tempore existentis.

In cujus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, decimo quinto die Octobris.

Per breve de privato sigillo.

Pat. 22, R. 2, p. 1, m. 8.

This patent differs only in a few subordinate particulars from that which Rymer has printed from the same roll, m. 5, *dated two days earlier, & subscribed,* Per ipsum regem.

No. XXIV.

PRO GALFRIDO CHAUCER.

REX omnibus ad quos, &c. salutem. 1399.

Sciatis quod, de gratia nostra speciali, concessimus & pro bono servicio quod dilectus armiger noster, Galfridus Chaucer, nobis impendit, & impendet, concessimus eidem Galfrido quadraginta marcas, percipiendas singulis annis, durante vita sua, ad scaccarium nostrum, ad terminos Pasche & Sancti Michaelis, per equales portiones, ultra illas viginti libras sibi per dominum Ricardum nuper rex Angliæ secundum post conquestum concessas, & per nos confirmatas, percipiendas durante vita sua ad scaccarium nostrum supradictum.

In cujus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, tercio decimo die Octobris.

Per breve de privato sigillo.

Pat. 1 H. 4, p. 5, m. 12.

No. XXV.

PRO GALFRIDO CHAUCER.

1399. REX omnibus ad quos, &c. salutem.

Constat nobis per inspeccionem rotulorum cancellarie domini Ricardi, nuper regis Anglie, secundi post conquestum, quod idem nuper rex literas suas patentes fieri fecit in hec verba,

Ricardus, &c. [vide No. XXI.]

Constat etiam nobis, per inspeccionem rotulorum cancellarie ejusdem nuper regis, quod idem nuper rex alias literas suas patentes fieri fecit in hec verba,

Ricardus, &c. [vide No. XXIII.]

Nos, pro eo quod idem Galfridus, coram nobis in cancellaria nostra personaliter constitutus, sacramentum prestitit corporale, quod litere predicte casualiter sunt amisse, tenorem inrotulamenti earumdem literarum duximus exemplificandum per presentes.

In cujus, &c.

Teste rege apud Westmonasterium, decimo octavo die Octobris.

Per ipsum regem.

Pat. 1, H. 4, p. 1, m. 18.

No. XXVI.

INDENTURA INTER CUSTODEM CAPELLE [BEATE MARIE WESTMONASTERII] ET GALFRIDUM CHAUCER PRO DOMO CERTO JUXTA CAPELLAM [PREDICTAM.] FIRMA LIII' IV .

1399. " HEC Indentura, facta apud Westmonasterium in Vigilia Natalis Domini Anno Regni Regis Henrici quarti post Conquestum primo, testatur quod Frater Robertus, Hermodesworth Commonachus & Custos Capelle beate Marie Westmonast. ex unanimi Assensu & Consensu Domini Abbatis, prioris, & Conventûs Westmonast. pre-

dicti concessit, dimisit, et ad firmam tradidit, Galfrido Chaucers Armigero unum Tenementum cum suis pertinenciis situatum in Gardino Capelle predicte Habendum et Tenendum Tenementum predictum cum suis pertinenciis eidem Galfrido à Vigilia Natalis Domini predicti usque ad finem et Terminum Quinquaginta et trium Annorum extunc proxime sequentium et plenarie completorum, Reddendo inde annuatim Custodi Capelle predicte qui pro Tempore fuerit seu ejus certo Attornato ad quatuor Anni Terminos usuales equaliter quinquaginta tres Solidos et quatuor denarios sterlingorum Et si dicta firma quinquaginta trium Solidorum et quatuor Denariorum ad aliquem Terminum quo solvi debeat in parte vel in toto per quindecim dies a retro fuerit non soluta: tunc bene liceat Custodi Capelle predicte qui pro Tempore fuerit aut ejus Attornatus in dicto Tenemento cum pertinentiis distringere et districtiones captas abducere, asportare, et penes se retinere quousque de dicta firma et arreragiis ejusdem si que fuerint sibi plenariè fuerit satisfactum: Et si nulla sufficiens districtio in dicto Tenemento cum pertinentiis inveniri poterit, quod tunc bene licebit custodi dicte Capelle, qui pro tempore fuerit in dictum tenementum cum suis pertinentiis reintrare et in pristino statu suo tenere presentibus Indenturis non obstantibus: Et dictus Galfridus Tenementum predictum cum suis pertinentiis sumptibus et custis suis propriis durante dicto Termino sustentabit, reparabit ac manutenebit et illud in adeo bono statu et reparatu quo in principio recepit seu meliori custodi ejusdem Capelle qui pro tempore fuerit in fine termini sui predicti sursum liberàbit & dimittet: Et non licebit predicto Galfrido tenementum predictum nec aliquam parcellam ejusdem infra idem tempus alicui dimittere seu ad firmam tradere nec alique privelegia et libertates seu Immunitates Ecclesie Westmonast. predicte petente in eodem tenemento recipere seu hospitari sine licentia custodis dicte Capelle qui pro tempore fuerit & sacriste Westmonasterii predicti speciali: Et si dictus Galfridus infra tempus predictum obierit tunc bene licebit custodi Capelle predicte, qui pro tempore fuerit in dictum Tenementum cum suis pertinentiis statim post obitum ejusdem Galfridi reintrare et in pristino statu suo

tenere presentibus Indenturis non obstantibus. In cujus rei testimonium tam Sigillum Fratris Roberti Custodis predicti officii sui quo utitur, quam sigillum predicti Galfridi partibus presentis Indenture alternatim sunt appensa Dat loco, die et Anno supradictis."

"Ex autographo (sigillis carente) in Archivis Decani et Capituli Westmonast."

FINIS.

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